

THE
HOME WORLD

Francis X. Doyle, S.J.



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There would never build
a house if he had no
woman or child for
whom to build it -
He that hath found no
good wife hath found no
good thing, and shall
never receive a pleasure from
the Lord -

THE HOME WORLD





THE HOLY FAMILY
Murillo

THE HOME WORLD

FRIENDLY COUNSELS FOR
HOME-KEEPING HEARTS

BY

FRANCIS X. DOYLE, S.J.



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✠ PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.

Archbishop of New York.

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To

My father, John A. Doyle, who, with the help of a sweet lady, my mother, dead these many years, made his home a beautiful thing in the sight of God and man.



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*Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest;
Home-keeping hearts are happiest,
For those that wander they know not where
Are full of trouble and full of care;
To stay at home is best.*

—Longfellow.

Song.

*Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.*

—Cowper.

The Task.

THE HOME WORLD

CHAPTER I

CHERISHING THE HOME

IN one day we live in many different worlds. There is the home-world of the morning hours before we bundle off to work. There is the street-world and the trolley-world that we mingle with on our way to work. And during the day, there is the long hard world of work, work, work. Then there is the returning round of these worlds but in an opposite direction, thank God, and ending in the world of home and comfort, happiness and rest. This repetition of home, work, home, varied by a little good amusement, a week or two of vacation in the summer months, periodical holidays, like Christmas and Easter, forms our life. This is true no matter what our work may be, and it is good once in a while to look into the various worlds that form our daily life and see what we are doing in them.

This multitude of worlds in the short space of one day is an impressive thing. It astounds you when you think about it. For we enter and remain a short time in each world, mingle with its respective inhabitants, exert a conscious or unconscious influence on each dweller there, and go out of it leaving it better or worse for the moment we lived in it. The silent influence of good or bad example has been the powerful weapon

wherewith we assaulted our neighbor. After all, it is about our influence in the little worlds that make up our daily round that we shall be questioned on the last day. Hence it is wise to sit here and review our conduct and see what we can do to bring more love and light and holy cheerfulness into the big world which is nothing more than all our little worlds put together.

For instance, look at the home-world. Your companions are the familiar ones of home, father, mother, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles. If you have not all these relatives, you know well those you have, and feel perfectly free in their company. There is an intimacy here which you will not experience in any other small world of the day, for no world is like this world of home. Its companions, atmosphere, resources and happiness surpass by far those of any world except that of Heaven. "Our natural and happiest life is when we lose ourselves in the exquisite absorption of home, the delicious retirement of dependent love."¹

"A home is four walls inclosing one family with identity of interest, and a privacy from outside inspection so complete that it is a world in itself, no one entering except by permission, bolted and barred and chained against all outside inquisitiveness. The phrase so often used in law-books and legal circles is mightily suggestive—every man's house is his castle, as much so as though it had drawbridge, portcullis, redoubt, bastion, and armed turret. Even the officer of the law may not enter to serve a writ except the door be voluntarily opened unto him; burglary, or the invasion of it, is a crime so offensive that the law

¹Mulock.

clashes its iron jaws on any one who attempts it.”²

You are so used to your home that you do not, perhaps, appreciate it as you should. Its continued stability has become an accepted thing. Your home is like the eternal mountains and it would be a fearful shock to you if anything occurred to shake its foundations and bring it crashing down. Oh, what a ruin is the crushed home! The walls have closed in relentlessly, and for you, maybe, the home does not exist any more. When the home is broken up, when some volcano of human emotions has erupted and belched its poison over your home-world, you will begin to realize what you enjoyed and what you miss. The broken home is a sad sight. The study of those violent emotions that wreck homes is the saddest of studies. Only a priest can fully realize what a sad study this is, for in his experience he has seen homes come tumbling down despite every effort to keep them firm.

The home is a ruin, like the deserted house Irving describes: “The house was now silent and deserted. I saw the windows of the study which looked out upon the soft scenery I have mentioned. The windows were closed—the library was gone. Two or three ill-favored beings were loitering about the place, whom my fancy pictured into retainers of the law. It was like visiting some classic fountain that had once welled its pure waters in a sacred shade, but finding it dry and dusty, with the lizard and the toad brooding over the shattered marbles.”

If in your present home-world, you can in any way, even by great sacrifices, prevent the spread of the poisonous emotions, never hesitate to do

²Talmage, *The Marriage Ring*.

it. The future will repay you by happiness. God will repay you by His graces. Have you ever seen a home wrecked by jealousy? Or stubbornness on the part of the wife or husband? It is something of this kind that grows up like the Genii in the Arabian Nights, and devours the little home-world which you fondly thought nothing could touch. In the beginning the thing was foul, but you did not notice it, just as you do not notice the minute specks of dust until the bright ray of sunlight catches them up and reveals them. And in their effects these infinitesimal beginnings are like the mighty Vesuvius, that roars its thunderous streams of molten rock down on the hapless cities and buries them in fire.

Small jealousies breed great disasters. Little hates are like accursed acorns from which grows nothing so beautiful as the majestic oak. Foul swamp weeds spring up from such seeds sown in the home-world and if the home does not become either suddenly or in the near future, a bleak, stagnant, loathsome swamp of human emotions, then the sacrifice of some hero or heroine saved it and transformed the hate and jealousy by love and forbearance.

Whatever world you enter or leave, whatever world you influence, there can be no question but that your widest influence is here in the home-world. The difficulty seems to be oftentimes that because this is the most familiar of our worlds, we neglect it more or less, and prove ourselves unconscious or thoughtless of its demands on our influence. Here we should be at our best. The finest gentleman and the finest lady are to be found at home. Outside of home we show our-

selves for a little while, but home is our abiding place, the center of our happiness, and it is here alone the truest and best that is in us should be discovered.

The finger of God points to home and He bids us find our earthly joy there, and the sad experience of many, is a fruitless search for happiness outside the sacred walls. And what does the world give in exchange for the gloomy harvest? Is it fame? Burke said that he would not give a peck of refuse wheat for fame. The poet Byron drained the cup of earthly joy to the dregs and then sighed for death. He had everything but a home. Glory and fame were his, but the warmth of home would never fill his veins with happiness. Fame! Why, this is air, a mere fantasy, something a fevered man sees in troubled dreams. Yet the world of home is beset by this phantom and the threshold is crossed many and many a time because fame beckons and, lacking the right judgment of what we leave and what we strive for, off we go into the gay arms of the world, only to return with our peck of refuse wheat and the tears of disappointed regret.

The touch of the outside world on flesh warmed by home-fires is like a demon's heated breath of passion. The ruin is terrific, because innocence has been blasted.

Our homes are sacred places. They afford us escape from sickening failure when we return breathless and conquered in the strife for money, place and glory; home is as refreshing as the cup of cool water after the heats of the day; it is our solace when the world has opened its huge maw and swallowed our peace. Faith in Christ is the

rock we cling to when the world grows stormy, and this faith is calm, serene and strong in the home. How many Prodigals have returned to the beloved walls with a sense of amazement and wonder that they could ever have left them so easily, so eagerly! The doors of home open outwards with slow creaking and noisy protest, but with gladness do they swing inward, like embracing arms.

A rich soil will grow as thick a crop of weeds as of wheat, and the difference is in sowing and cultivating, the time and labor and amount of self-sacrifice in keeping out the weed and helping the wheat to grow its golden grains. Now the rich soil of the home is this soil of self-sacrifice and the harvest is more golden than wheat.

How often have you seen some good self-sacrificing girl save the home from ruin after the mother had died? She slaved for the younger children, sacrificed her youth to hard work, her beauty to nights with the needle and hours over the cooking range, and perhaps in the end became an old maid for her charity. She never had time for wooing. Her life was the worker's life, the burden was on her slim shoulders, and if the children today know what the influence of home means, she is responsible and hers is the reward. There must be a special place set apart in heaven for those faithful, self-sacrificing women, who raise the children of other mothers at the hard price of never having children of their own. What would become of many families if all the old maid aunts had not sacrificed themselves on the stone of selfless devotion?

How often have you seen some young boy just

growing into manhood take on his shoulders the support of the family when the father was snatched away suddenly and when the distracted mother hardly cared where the next meal was to come from! The other children were too young to realize the seriousness of their loss. They drew their chairs up to the dining-table as usual. There had to be bread and the young boy earned it. Perhaps he gave up an education to hold that home together. If, then, he does not know how to spell correctly; if he does not use the choicest language in his conversation, do not consider him a boor, an uncouth fellow not worth knowing. In God's sight he is a hero, and your opinion, while it may hurt his feelings, will not change the eternal decrees one whit. It is you who are foolish to condemn a fellowman or woman without knowledge of the circumstances that went to mould his life.

This is the real influence to be exerted in home-worlds. This is real charity. Self-sacrifice like this can hold back the tide of many destroying floods and keep the home safe. This is one of the finest things in the world and you can see the fineness and beauty of it very often in the clear, brave eye of the girl and boy making the sacrifice. Without such heroism many a home would be a barn, and without it the mansion of marble may as well be the swamp lands where crows caw their mournful cries.

The whole human race is but one large family, and Eden was the cradle, the world is its home, the Father in heaven is at once the guardian, the law-maker and the reward, but self-sacrifice has been demanded of lonely women and brave men

*The whole human race is but
one large family*

ever since the race was born. Woman must always be up and doing and agonizing over the children of men, and if her smile is music and her voice a song, the theme of the harmony is sacrifice.

Think how wonderful must have been the first long ray of pure white light as it went leaping in its splendor across the gloomy dark of primal chaos! Yet this beauty was only material, and the beauty of self-sacrifice is greater. This beam of light pierces the worldly chaos of today and illumines souls. Its reach is limitless and its beams are cheering comfort. Where self-sacrifice is, there the home is truly cherished. This is the first ruddy home-fire and it should never grow dull or chill for want of fuel.

CHAPTER II

OLD FAMILIAR THINGS

IN the home-world everything is familiar, so much so that you do not notice those details of life and living that surround you. The paper on the wall, for example, has become so much a part of your eyesight that you cannot tell off-hand what color it is. Thus the things we are most familiar with are the things we know least. This statement may sound strange, but truly here the old saying is verified that familiarity breeds contempt. You have but to test this argument on your friends. When you are at work today, ask your best friend: "What is the color of the paper on the dining-room wall?"

You will get an answer like this:

"The paper on the dining-room wall? Why, eh, it's a kind of blue, I think, one of these flower effects, you know. But wait! Maybe it's red. Now I come to think of it, it is red. But I may be mistaken. Really, I forget."

The same may be said of the curtains on the windows. Unless you took a certain overweening pride in hanging them yourself, or in making them, it is safe to say that you will not notice them particularly until they have been taken down. Then their absence calls your attention to the fact that they were once there. It is like an alarm

hellish upheaval of noise. Gradually, when one heard this sound day after day, one got used to it. After three years and a half I was so habituated that when I was sent to Washington on the French Military Mission, I could not sleep at night. I grew very nervous. I did not know what was the matter. I sought the cause of the trouble and finally came to the conclusion that I could not sleep because there was not noise enough. I missed my big shells."

Certainly this was a strange sound to lull a man to sleep and yet when the noise was absent, Father Jousse missed it. He was not suffering from the ordinary shell shock but from the *loss* of his shell music. He had become used to the hissing lullaby of death.

The American soldiers, in the same way, found difficulty in sleeping in a mere four-walled room when they returned from overseas or camp. They had been used to the large room of outdoors, with the sky for roof and the wind blowing fresh on their faces. When they came home and got into bed and tried to sleep, they choked. There was not enough air. Such is man! A creature of custom, a piece of putty that can be moulded quite rapidly into various forms which he hates to lose once they are fixed on him.

So it is the same way with the curtains on the windows of your home. You could not describe them, especially if you are a man, and more, you could not realize how much they add to your warm home comfort. But when they are taken down and the cold glass of the window stares harshly at you, you know at once that something has gone wrong. A familiar thing is absent. }

Even the china cups and saucers, the plates and knives and forks, are things of importance in the home-world. They make up those details that are called local coloring, and yet they exist as such only in your inner consciousness. Put a new cup on the saucer for breakfast and you notice it at once. How many times have you passed over the old one unnoticed?

"Why look!" you will say, "here's a new cup! It's got a green border!"

The chairs and tables are old familiar things. The table-cloths you have admired in your youth, wondered at in your middle age, and laughed at when you came back from your own very modern home to see the old folks.

Consider the clock on the dining-room mantelpiece. There is a brave Indian rider on a prancing horse. The savage holds a long sharp spear, and the horse has one foreleg gracefully curved. The set of his head is magnificent. The flowing mane is majestic. You can smell the fresh breeze that is blowing. Now when you were young, you used to stand in front of the mantelpiece and marvel at that clock. First, it spoke to you for a long time in little rusty-like whisperings, *tick-i-ti-tock, tick-i-ti-tock*; and the red Indian looked ferociously at you and the horse seemed very wild. The Indian's menacing spear sent a thrill through your young blood and you could never get over the marvel of so much splendid action frozen in one small piece of bronze.

But the best of all times in your youth was the striking of that clock. When you remember it now, close your eyes and, if it is striking nine o'clock in the evening, you can see your white-

haired grandmother knitting at the dining-room table; and the old grandfather quietly sleeping in the wide-armed rocker. Notice how his head has fallen to one side? Perhaps your brother John, who is going to college, is frowning over the Greek or Latin or maybe a problem in geometry. You can see the lamp with the soft red shade. Your young sister is studying very hard and you rejoice your eyes in the calm beauty of her face. You? What are you doing? Can you remember as you watch the old clock now? Well, you were in the corner talking with your mother. And Dad was there near the lamp, poring over the political sheet and shaking his head at the downfall of the world.

Suddenly the clock groans, chimes a warning, and then strikes nine silver strokes of home-music. Your grandfather wakes up with a stiff neck and rubs it hard to restore the circulation. John's brow clears. He had set a time limit to his work and the problem was solved. He works by the clock and is just as systematic now. Your pretty sister looks up, gasps at the time, and turns back to her work. Your grandmother looks around the room, smiles one of those wrinkly old smiles that are filled with such deep knowledge of human life. Then perhaps you kissed your mother and went to bed, yawning hard as you tramped wearily up the stairs.

Anyhow, stand in front of the clock, shut your eyes, and submit yourself willingly to its magic spell and you will easily see all those dear things of the past that can come back to you now only in vision. True, the clock and the prancing horse and the Indian remain. The clock speaks as

sweetly as ever of the flowing tide we call time, but, well—the old grand-parents are not there any more, and in many, many homes, the mother's voice is not heard, and the boys and girls are away far and wide working in other little worlds of their own.

If growth to manhood and womanhood has brought you many favors and blessings, it has also taken many away and these you recall once in a while when you come back into the world of the old home and see all its familiar surroundings and settings. Think of the influence the old home had on you and then ask yourself very honestly about your influence on the world of your own home nowadays.

"Our hearts," says Oliver Wendell Holmes, are held down to our homes by innumerable fibres, trivial as I have just recalled; but Gulliver was fixed to the soil, you remember, by pinning his head a hair at a time. Even a stone with a whitish band crossing it, belonging to the pavement of the back-yard, insisted on becoming one of the talismans of memory. . . . But the plants that come up year after year in the same place . . . give me the liveliest home-feeling. Close to our ancient gambrel-roofed house is the dwelling of pleasant old Neighbor Walrus. I remember the sweet honeysuckle that I saw in flower against the wall of his house a few months ago, as long as I remember the sky and stars. That clump of peonies, butting their purple heads through the soil every spring in just the same circle, and by and by unpacking their hard balls of buds in flowers big enough to make a double handful of leaves, has come up in just that place, Neighbor

Walrus tells me, for more years than I have passed on this planet. It is a rare privilege in our nomadic state to find the home of one's childhood and its immediate neighborhood thus unchanged. Many born poets I am afraid, flower poorly in song, or not at all, because they have been too often transplanted."²

The old-fashioned mantelpieces with their quaint statuettes and embroidered hangings formed a bright bit of color in your home-world. Perhaps they do yet but in apartment-house life these ancient ornaments are out of date. They take up too much room and the loss is really never made up.

The kitchen stove has disappeared with the years and a modern gas contrivance has taken its place. Can you remember the wonderful smell of baking bread soaring through the house like a blessing? Can you remember the huge slice of fresh bread your mother gave you when you returned home after school? You had to bring up the coal for the fire, that's true, and it was never an agreeable performance. Still, on a winter's night, with the wind trying to wreck the house and shrieking and yelling outside like a demon, that warm coal fire and the clean kitchen and the loaves of fresh bread on the table were things to be proud of and in your heart there was great contentment. That is, if you were a homey body and loved simplicity. Nowadays it seems as if all those fine old things were to be laughed at. The mistake is a sad one and the sooner we all return to the strength of that ancient home with its wonderful simplicity and peace, the sooner shall we sophisticated, proud and foolish moderns be-

²Holmes, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*.

come almost as good as the great people who bore us, who trained us and finally left us to rush headlong into the icebergs we are now.

So the poet sings of the changes time has brought

This is my home again! Once more I hail
The dear old gables and the creaking vanes:
It stands all flecked with shadows in the moon,
Patient and white and woeful. 'Tis so still,
It seems to brood upon its youthful years,
When children sported on its ringing floors,
And music trembled through its happy rooms.³

An old man was moaning about modern improvements. His pet trouble was the loss of mantlepieces. With him there was a particular affection for a certain mantelpiece and in trying to find out his grudge against us moderns, we finally wormed the story out of him.

"Why," he said, "it was this way. My father was a big man, six feet and more. My mother was small, five feet, two inches. We boys used to pick her up and carry her around the house many times despite her protesting cries. When we were young boys just growing up, we never hoped to be as big as Pop but when we began to reach up to the mantelpiece in the dining-room, mother would sigh and say: 'Jim is as big as I am.'

"Regularly every birthday, Pop lined up the boys and girls and made Mom stand at the mantelpiece. Her dear head just reached the top. Then there was excitement and accurate measuring to see if the boy was as big as his mother. Soon she was the smallest of her family and then there was a

³Alexander Smith.

celebration. I can always see the old mantelpiece and one of these frilly hangings with a lot of raised work on the borders. I forget what they call them. Lambrequins, isn't it? And I can always see my mother standing there with Pop measuring the children by her head. My mother! She has been dead for fifty years! May God grant me the grace to see her soon! I shall be as proud of her in Heaven as I was on earth."

The old man, after all is said, had a good reason to like mantelpieces. He evidently loved that particular one for its associations with his mother. Her influence over the children in her home-world must have been powerful as it was gentle and lasting.

The story is related of Henry Clay, the eloquent old man of the Senate, that when he lay dying, his fevered brain brought up images of his mother long since dead, and the old man cried out continually, "My Mother! Mother! Mother!" This is a sure index of the influence Clay's mother had upon him in early life and we can wish nothing more blessed in a home than this motherly influence which survives age and the passing of years and the glitter of glory. The home on earth is called the vestibule of heaven where all the precious mothers of the race are waiting to continue that love and influence which they began on earth and left off for a little time to go see God. Consider this picture sketched by a son thinking of his mother: "There she sits, the old Christian mother, ripe for heaven. Her eyesight is almost gone, but the splendors of the celestial city kindle up her vision. The gray light of heaven's morn has struck through the gray locks

which are folded back over the wrinkled temples. She stoops very much now under the burden of care she used to carry for her children. She sits at home too old to find her way to the house of God; but while she sits there, all the past comes back, and the children that forty years ago tripped round her arm-chair with their griefs and joys and sorrows—those children are gone now, some caught up into a better realm, where they shall never die, and others out in the broad world, testing the excellency of a Christian mother's discipline. Her last days are full of peace, and calmer and sweeter will her spirit become, until the gates of life shall lift and let the worn-out pilgrim into eternal springtide and youth, where the limbs never ache, and the eyes never grow dim, and the staff of the exhausted and decrepit pilgrim shall become the palm of the immortal athlete!"⁴

When we are dead fifty years, we may not have any one to remember us as nicely and heartily as the old gentleman remembered his mother, but this is an iron fact, unbreakable and lasting, that if we do exert a holy, strong influence in the home-world and in every other world we enter and leave during the day, some one will remember us, if not by name, certainly by our good deeds.

St. Augustine thus describes the death of his mother, St. Monica, who had borne him not only into the world by her sufferings, but also brought him forth into the Catholic Church by her unceasing tears. In his confessions he says: "In the ninth day therefore of her illness, in the fifty-sixth year of her age, that devout and holy soul was released from her body. I closed her eyes.

⁴Talmage.

Grief took possession of my very soul, and poured itself out in tears, so that my eyes with the violence of my sorrow wept themselves dry, and I suffered greatly from this anguish of sadness. . . . Nor did we deem it fitting to celebrate that death with murmuring tears and groans, this being the ordinary way of showing grief for a certain destitution, or sort of total extinction, which men attribute to the dead. But she neither died unhappily nor was hers any death at all. This was firmly impressed on our minds both by the unerring example of her conduct and by her genuine faith."

Thus did a Saint weep for his mother, also a Saint, and acknowledge her influence on his soul. Augustine speaks most tenderly of his mother's loss, as may be seen from the suffering he experienced after the burial.

"When the body was removed, we returned tearless to our home; for I did not weep even during the prayers we prayed to Thee, as the Sacrifice of our redemption was offered for her when the corpse was placed by the grave before it was lowered, according to the usual rite, but all day long I suffered great anguish of heart, and in my agitation, I asked Thee as best I could to calm my grief, yet Thou wouldst not. . . . Then I slept and on awakening found my grief not a little softened, and being as I was in the solitude of my bed, those true verses of Thy servant Ambrose occurred to my mind; for Thou art

Maker of all, the Lord
And Ruler of the height,
Who, robing day in light, hast poured
Soft slumbers o'er the night,
That to our limbs the power

Of toil may be renewed,
And hearts be raised that sink and cower,
And sorrows be subdued."⁵

The prayer he offers Our Lord in her behalf is affecting in its fervor and simple faith. He begs mercy for the sins of his mother. "Forgive her, O Lord, forgive her, I beseech Thee, and enter not into judgment with her." He urges Our Lord to remember that Monica desired nothing more than to be commemorated at the altar "which she had served without a single day's intermission. From the altar she knew that the Holy Victim is dispensed, by Whom the handwriting that was against us is blotted out. . . . Thy handmaid enchained her soul to His sacrament of our redemption by the bond of faith. Let no one withdraw her from Thy protecting arm. . . . May she rest, then, in peace. . . ."

⁵*Confessions.*

CHAPTER III

BUILDING THE HOME

HOME is the centre of our influence. Here we must meet those who are nearest and dearest to us and shape their lives for better or worse. Here in the home is erected the altar of the best human love. "Home," said a certain Jesuit, "means the bonds of blood and ties of tenderness which clasp into one close intimacy the hearts of those who, hand in hand, journey Heavenward. Home is the moral circle within which minds and hearts share the same shelter, breathe the same atmosphere, bear the same burdens, sympathize in the same sorrows, enjoy the same pleasures, divide the same toils, and contribute to the same success."¹

Building this home is very important. "If your life were but a fever-fit—the madness of a night, whose follies were all to be forgotten in the dawn, it might matter little how you fretted away the sickly hours, what toys you snatched at or let fall—what visions you followed wistfully with the deceived eyes of sleepless frenzy."²

But your life is bound up with others. You are creating a world and you are not God. When the parent nest has grown too small for you, and your heart begins to sigh after your own home, as dear a home too, as the one you leave, then it is neces-

¹Kane, *The Plain Gold Ring*. ²Ruskin.

sary to look for the firmest foundation on which to create your world. And be not afraid to speak of your hopes and your love. Today, this silence is harmful, a real bane on family life. Love is not merely a rhyme for dove; love is not a thing to hide in shame. Let no one sneer you into a blush for your honest affection. Father Kane speaks bluntly on this matter of "Love's Young Dream."

"Do not misunderstand, do not misjudge, the noblest instinct of human life. Alas! alas! there is nothing true, nothing good, nothing noble, nothing beautiful in human life, that has not its caricature. There is nothing lovable that is not exposed to the sneer of the conceited cynic, or to the laughter of the vulgar fool. What is most sacred in its majesty may, by a cunning buffoon, be made to look grotesque. What is most exquisite in its simplicity may appear contemptible in the eyes of a stupid student. Thus even love has been warped into meaning either what in human idiocy is most silly, or what in human brutishness is most foul. Of such meanings I do not speak. I do not speak of love that is false. I speak of love that is true."³

What then is to be the foundation of your homeworld, the sustainer of love's altar, the material expression of your rosy dream? "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."⁴ Here is a direct, positive answer. The Lord is your home's foundation, and if you build your love on Him, you will build higher than the Tower of Babel, for you will really reach Divinity in His own home. You will touch the beauty of the sky and lift up by your influence many, many

³*The Plain Gold Ring.* ⁴*Psalms cxxvi.*

souls to look into God's Face. The Jews had been building the great Temple of God and became discouraged when the neighboring nations obstructed the work. Then the Holy Spirit reminded them that the works of man are nothing unless God has the first place. (It is God who helps the builders, God who actually builds; and the house is God's after it is built. Trust in God if you want to lay the foundations of your home strongly. Pray to Him with your whole heart and work as if the whole house depended on your own individual efforts. Then your home will be a beautiful thing, mighty, massive and majestic, resting secure as a mountain on its base in the Hand of God. Whose fingers set the sun and moon and stars in the heavens? Whose hand holds up the skies? Whose arm is the firm support of the earth? Who wears the jewelled heavens on his finger even as you wear your ring? Can you doubt that He will hold up your home, if you build it on Him?)

Indeed, we must build on God and for God. Even though we seem to live in a world all our own, set aside from spheres inhabited by other mortals, we are not, in reality, alone, for there ever rests with us the obligation of building our home for God in the centre of our hearts. This is a loftier building than the dwelling-place physical, for it must be made to welcome none other than the God for whom the Universe is small, whom the doors of heaven welcome only by lifting up the gates. We cannot welcome Him or ask His help in building our homes until we have stripped self of all its mean, arbitrary and senseless demands. This majestic Dweller, this Guest must

have the whole place for Himself since it is said that He is a jealous God. If our hearts are to be the Inn where God takes His rest, we must scour it, and cleanse it, and furnish it, furbish it and yet again purify it, till self is not even a speck of dust on the glittering bright walls.

So, this matter of building a home on God demands the building of a home for God in our hearts, and see how much we gain by welcoming God into our souls! We exchange the world for its Maker; the toy for the designer; the tinsel for the gold. (By bringing Him into our homes we bring love into our hearts, pleasure into our lives, and the trifling loss of earthly pleasures will not even be felt when we greet this Guest, look into His eyes and suddenly discover there the source of all beauty, all pleasure, all happiness. This is the home of the heart and God is waiting for each one to build it, and just as you are anxious about the material home which will house your loved ones, and decide at last that the only safe foundation is God Himself, so you will find that the interior home of your own heart must first shelter God.)

We are imbued with a good quality, American resourcefulness. If we start something, we see it through. This is good, for it implies firm purpose, resolute will, and the mastership of difficulties. But there is also the danger that we may build our works on ourselves. Analyze yourself and you must come to the sad conclusion that you are dust. Now dust is a wavering foundation, and be American in your hard-headed business sense and realize that a dust-foundation never yet made a happy home. Too many homes are built

on dust. Too many families work alone, as if there were no God. They waste their strength; they are pouring into their hearts the bitterness of future tears. Let the One who built the lily and clothed it more beautifully than Solomon, let Him have a hand in the house with your children, your friends. If He knows how to build a tree, He will know how to help you in the fabric of your home. If He can make a blade of grass grow, create an Angel, make out of nothing a creature like the Blessed Virgin Mary, He is worth while having in the house. The world is God's and you cannot get rid of Him.

Suppose you do not call on God's help in caring for your home. What will you do by yourself? Have you seen a man rake dry autumn leaves into a heap and set a match to them? Have you watched the sudden bright glow, the leap of the flame, the swift destruction? And look intently at the insignificant heap of charred leaves, a hillock of dust for the winds to sport with. That is what a man does when he attempts anything without God. He builds a sad gray ruin for a tramp wind to whistle through.

The sandy beach at Atlantic City is a delight to the eye. There is hardness to it, a firmness which does not show your footprint. Indeed there would be no poetical sands of time at Atlantic City. Now would you dare to build your home even on that sand? Watch the child scoop up a bucket of the loose stuff, for that is just what the sand on that magnificent beach is, loose stuff, but a lot of it together. A pillar of sand will not support itself. Would you build your home on it?

And then walk along the beach and look out

at the waves; hear the roar and thunder of their fall; see the menace of their sullen rise; see the bared white fangs of the spray as the waters curl high and leap at the shore; see how the surf licks up the sand, grinds it ravenously, and swallows it; listen to the foul hissing as the waves slink back into the deep. Suppose you built your home there on that fine beach. Where would it be now? Yet that is what you do when you build your home or your children's character or anything else without God—you build on a pillar of loose sand in sight of the sea-devil's open mouth, with his white fangs grinning expectantly.

Without God you can do nothing, and this should be remembered when the home-world is sunny or sad. Who but God can help you bear the grief of loneliness when you come home from the graveyard and sit down in the darkened room yearning for the one who will come no more into your little world? You go through the house and see the rocking chair she preferred. You come suddenly on her sewing basket! The needles are so idle now. Her swift, graceful fingers are strangely still and stiff. No more will they engage in the homely work of mending or making. Sometimes you can hear her step on the stairs. You call out her name, forgetting that her ears are filled with dust. When the night comes and you sit at the table alone, you may fall into a doze, and awake suddenly, thinking you see her looking at you. But—her eyes are filled with dust. Sometimes she sang carelessly as she worked about your home-world and now perhaps you hear the echo of her tones. Listen! Is not that her voice echoing through the upper rooms?

Can't you hear it? The same song you were so fond of? But—you know that her mouth is filled with dust and no music will brighten your home-world again.

Then it is nice to sit down and think that you and she built your home on God. You did not work by yourselves though you worked so hard together. God was your support then and He is holding her in His hand now. You know that she does not wish to come back to you, for once she has seen God, all her soul is flooded with peace. She has at last gone into the home-world for which we are all destined, and if we do not reach it at last, we have built in vain.

St. Paul urged the Corinthians to build on God. "You are the house of God," he told them, and that means that you are built by God, on God, and God dwells in you. He made you His home. St. Paul adds: "As a wise architect I have laid the foundation, but another builds." Now we know that if the chief architect of the great universe is absent from the planning and the actual building, then men build in vain, be they Corinthians of an age gone into the maw of time or resourceful Americans leaping into the marvellous future.

St. Matthew tells us who this great chief architect is. "Upon this rock I will build My Church," said Christ to Peter, and if we learn from Him, we will build on the rock of Peter and of Christ. With God for the foundation your home will stand up against any storm that blows. An earthquake may rock the world as your hand rocks the cradle. Your home will not tremble. Fire, water, wind and wave may hiss, pound, shriek and rum-

ble against your cottage walls. That cottage is your castle and nothing will break it down. You read of huge impregnable fortresses crumpled up during the war by siege guns built to knock them into heaps of broken stone and distorted steel. No gun will ever be built to knock your home into a hapless mass of ruins—if, ah—if you built your home on God.

This is splendid practical advice to the young married man building his home. "Deny yourself all superfluities and all luxuries until you can say, 'Everything in this house is mine, thank God, every timber, every brick, every foot of plumbing, every doorsill.' Do not have your children born in a boarding house and do not yourself be buried from one. Have a place where your children can shout and sing and romp without being overhauled for the racket. Have a kitchen where you can do something toward the reformation of evil cookery and the lessening of this nation of dyspeptics. As Napoleon lost one of his great battles by an attack of indigestion, so, many men have such a daily wrestle with the food swallowed that they have no strength left for the battle of life."⁵

And in building your home it is well to recall what Ruskin said:

"The one point you may be assured of is this, that your happiness does not at all depend on the size of your house . . . but depends entirely on your having peaceful and safe possession of it—on your habits of keeping it clean and in order—on the material of it being trustworthy, if they are no more than stone and turf—and on your contentment with it, so that gradually you may

⁵Talmage.

mend it to your mind, day by day, and leave it to your children a better house than it was. To your children and to theirs, desiring for them that they may live as you have lived; and not strive to forget you, and stammer when any one asks who you were, because, forsooth, they have become fine folks by your help.”⁶

You will like this reflection of the poet Southey that a house is never perfectly furnished for enjoyment unless there is in it a child rising three years old, and a kitten rising three weeks. “The more womanly a woman is,” says a writer on home affairs, “the more she is sure to throw her personality over her home, and transform it from a mere eating and sleeping place or an upholsterer’s show-room, into a sort of outermost garment of her soul.”

Finally, when the home is built, the woman should remember that “it is a woman and only a woman—a woman all by herself, if she likes, and without any man to help her—who can turn a house into a home.”⁷ And if the building of the house depends so much on the man to make the house a home, it seems to be the peculiar gift of the woman, and yet it would seem that the woman mentioned is not so much the husband’s wife as the mother of his children. Yes, and mothering the poor man too, since by himself he has a tendency toward barbarism and savagery. Man would never build a house if he had no woman or child for whom to build it.

⁶*Fors Clavigera.* ⁷Cobbe.

CHAPTER IV

RULING THE HOME

ONCE the home-world has been builded, it must be ruled. This is as important as the building. A fine strong house with a witless master is folly. (You may have seen a drunken driver beating a noble, thoroughbred horse and you said in your heart: "Well, that horse has more nobility than the driver." If you build your home-world well and then leave it to itself, without rules, ruler or ruled, you will be as senseless as the drunken driver.) You will have a fine piece of property and you will know only how to abuse it.

Who should rule the home? The word "husband" means "the master of the house," and so answers our question. Now, should he rule alone? Put the answer diplomatically in this way: "The father is President and the mother is his wife." Then, as often happens, it is most likely that the home is ruled by the President's wife.

You remember the story of the great Athenian, Themistocles. He seemed averse to the cares of children, and, to his wife's petition, the learned pagan answered:

"The Athenians rule the Greeks. I rule the Athenians. You rule me. Shall a child rule you? Be careful that a foolish baby does not govern all Greece."

Of course, Themistocles said this with a smile but he should have paused when he said: "You rule me." That was the end of the answer; for, if his wife ruled him, then she ruled all the Greeks.

So it is with the rulers of the home world. The husband rules the home, and the wife rules the husband, and the children rule both mother and father, at least nowadays. In old times the father was the stern commander. There was never any doubt as to the ruler, and those old days were good for this among many other things, that they clearly defined rights and duties and imposed clear-cut obligations on the commander and the commanded.

The father then must rule. The mother also must rule, though the word "wife" meant, once on a time, "weaver," and this position would seem to deny all rule except in immediate domestic affairs, such as clothes and food. Hence the government of the home-world is not a monarchy nor an aristocracy nor a democracy. It is a duocracy with monarchistic tendencies. In plain American this means that at the beginning of married life the bride and groom hold the reins of government, but before the end of the first year and forever after, the woman is the ruler and the man is a silent advisory board. Themistocles is good authority for this. Holy Scripture, however, is quite blunt on this subject. "To the woman also He said: I will multiply thy sorrows and thy conceptions. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee."¹

¹Gen. iii, 16.

If, then, the father and mother are to rule the home, they must first rule themselves. The only way to learn how to command is to obey. It is absurd to try to steer a rowboat when you do not know how to row. We want to be Colonels and Captains before we learn how to march and shoot a rifle like a private. Imagine a Colonel ordering his men into the jaws of death and then looking up Webster's dictionary to find out what the jaws of death mean!

You think it is easy to rule yourself? Then, is the home-world free from swearing? From lying? Do you watch your words before the children? You may be entertaining your best friend at the dinner table and in telling of your fishing trip during the summer, the black lie slips out quite naturally. "I brought home fifty porgies," you say, and Mame knows there were only thirty-five. So does little Jane, whose sharp ears are wide open to the lie. You may excuse yourself by saying that fishing-stories are naturally white lies and universally popular, but does Jane know this? Your friend does.

Or you come home from work and the tea is cold. Then the nasty word leaps out from behind the barriers of your teeth, and shocks your wife and Jane and Tommy. Next day the boy goes out to shoot marbles and tries to imitate your explosive manner of saying that the tea is cold. Tommy is admired by his cronies and explains the source of his knowledge:

"Huh! My father said dat. He can swear some, he can."

Is it so easy, after all, to rule yourself?

In Macbeth there is a scene with a tragic humor

in it, tragic because of the setting, since both mother and son will be murdered; humorous because Shakespeare has made the child speak a wisdom beyond his years, and has surprised Lady Macduff into a queer designation of her son. The father has fled to escape the murderous Macbeth and the mother thinks for the moment that he has deserted her. The boy asks:

"Was my father a traitor, mother?"

"Ay, that he was."

"What is a traitor?"

"Why, one that swears and lies."

"And be all traitors that do so?"

"Every one that does so is a traitor and must be hanged."

"And must they all be hanged, that swear and lie?"

"Every one."

"Who must hang them?"

"Why, the honest men."

"Then the liars and swearers are fools; for there are liars and swearers enough to beat the honest men, and hang up them."

Lady Macduff is so surprised at this filial wisdom that she exclaims:

"Now God help thee, poor monkey!"

Setting aside this uncomplimentary epithet, the boy, you will notice, spoke a deal of truth. And does not the epithet imply that the boy had heard this said before and was only imitating some one in repeating it now? So much for the quick eyes and ears of children and the need for the greatest care when they are watching us. You may have seen a child in a corner hunched up and forgotten, unnoticed by his gossiping elders, with hands em-

bracing cheeks, and knees drawn up under his chin. Look at the eyes. They are big with the interest of innocence. Knowledge is speeding into that white brain. You may blot the soul forever by rehearsing a scandal. Remember that:

"A foolish son is the grief of his father: and a wrangling wife is like a roof continually dropping through. House and riches are given by parents; but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord."²

"He that hath found a good wife hath found a good thing, and shall receive a pleasure from the Lord."³

The young Macduff reduced the world to swearers and liars those who do not swear or lie. It was a simple matter of addition for him—the number of swearers being greater than the number of non-swearers. Hence his conclusion that the swearers were fools to permit themselves to be hanged up by the honest men. Or perhaps we should be numbered among the honest men and be beaten and hanged by the vast majority of swearers and liars. This may console us but you know in your heart whether, in accepting such consolation, you are really lying to yourself and so putting yourself outside the few honest men. Many a man has been his own worst liar and you have heard men damn themselves, yes, swear even by the Holy Name, though, thank God, this is now rare among Catholics.

Read this quaint description of the father who is careless with his children and careful with his horse. "It is a pity that, commonly, more care is had, yea, and that among very wise men, to find out rather a cunning man for their horse than

²*Prov.* xix, 13-14. ³*Ibid.* iv, 18.

a cunning man for their children. They say nay in word, but they do so in deed. For to one they will gladly give a stipend of two hundred crowns a year, and are loth to offer the other two hundred shillings. God that sitteth in heaven, laugheth their choice to scorn, and rewardeth their liberality as it should. For he suffereth them to have tame and well-ordered horses, but wild and unfortunate children. And therefore in the end they find more pleasure in their horse than comfort in their children."⁴

The rulers of the home must have the same policy. There must be union of purpose among them and this is symbolized by the wedding ring. Now why is the fourth finger of the left hand the ring finger? You will be surprised at the answer St. Ambrose gives. The fourth finger is the ring finger because it has a vein running straight to the heart. Hence the ring binding the finger binds the heart. The ring is the outward expression of the captive heart. The circlet of gold put on the bride's finger circles her love and binds it to her husband. Hence, if husband and wife are to rule the home-world they must have a policy which is in keeping with the love symbolized by the wedding ring.

"Is it true," a stout physician was asked, "about this vein running from the fourth finger back to the heart?"

He laughed in amused disgust. He was expected to laugh and we were not put out by his cynicism. And even if the whole story is physiologically false, the lesson remains, the lesson of love, mutual love, taught and expressed by the ring. This is the love husband and wife should

⁴Roger Ascham.

have in ruling the domain of home. Anyway, why is the ring on the fourth finger? Let the cynics answer.

There is a gentleman of noble bearing and handsome appearance who attracts quiet attention by the thick gold band he wears on his finger. His wife is dead and this is her wedding ring. But all around the ring the flesh rises in regular mountains, so that there is formed a deep gold valley. Somehow or other this gentleman got the ring on his finger. Nothing will take it off but a sharp file. The ring is of the old-fashioned kind, very broad and heavy, and at first glance you would think it caused great pain. If you mentioned this to our friend, he would shake his head and say:

"Oh, no! Not at all. The finger is used to it now. You see, she died ten years ago and that is a long time. The ring comes off with the finger."

Such love is a thrilling thing to see. One of this man's sons told a story about his father.

"Pop has always been touchy since Mom died. So when one day at dinner at the shop, a brazen-mouthed superintendent said: 'Gosh, John! You ought to get married again! You're young, and handsome and got money—' That was all the fellow could say, for a chair was pushed back hurriedly and if it had not been for two men on either arm, the brazen mouth would have been closed, perhaps by a crack with the wedding ring. Anyhow, the man begged Pop's pardon and the thunderstorm blew off."

This husband still remembered the little maid to whom he said: "With this ring I thee wed," and though she has gone ahead of him into the

dimness of the future, he will carry her ring to her very faithfully. St. Gregory said this about marriage:

"I put the two right hands each to each, and I join them with the hands of God."

That is the principle on which the gentleman acts. He supposes that God's hand is holding his wife, and the other is stretched out for him, and though there are no marriages in Heaven, still old loves will remain tender and sweet, throughout eternity.

Now hear the praise of a wise woman for whom such a gentleman wears his ring. Scripture cries out: "Who shall find a valiant woman? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her. The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils. She will render him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. . . . She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor. She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow; for all her domestics are clothed with double garments. . . . Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day. . . . She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children rose up, and called her blessed; her husband, and he praised her. Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."⁵

Nowadays the presence of such a valiant mother in the home means that the home is well guided in its destinies. The daughters are not

⁵*Prov.* xxxi.

affected by the leprosy of dress, and the boys are growing into stalwart men of God. This valiant woman will see that discipline guides the home and, according to St. Cyprian, discipline is the guardian of hope, supports faith, and leads us on the road of salvation. Discipline, too, is the nourishment of a good character, a mistress of virtue, and virtue is the only sure defense of happiness. St. Augustine remarks that where discipline is repressed wickedness rages unpunished.

Incalculable is the influence of the mother on her son. How bitterly is he assaulted by the storms of corrupt nature! He "is prone to evil from his youth," and must be taught the ways of God, to keep the law, like Tobias's son, "whom the father taught to fear God from his infancy and to keep away from all sin."⁶ The son needs God's law because the body when strong becomes insistent in its demands, and without the experience of mature life, sober prudence and caution are not likely to be the elements steering the boy's course in the seething currents. When the sailor does not know the channel ahead, he anchors or makes slow, tedious progress, to the shrieking of fog-sirens and warning calls from neighboring ships. Now the boy must know that the map of his course is the law of God; that purity and innocence are the virtues his mother most desires and delights in, and that his own flesh is treacherous and unreliable. Is not a treacherous friend worse than an open enemy?

To whom can the son go, if not to his father and mother in these early struggles, and whose is the voice that cries out the warning to him when sin allures? Why, it is the mother's; and

⁶*Tobias i.*

his reverence for her will never permit him to put his foot in the gutter or thrust any one further into the slime. The pure white light about his mother's head, her searching glance into his eyes, will be the deterrents from evil by natural motives, and the laws of God which she taught, will guide him clear and safe into harbor. Besides her influence on the boy, the valiant woman must guide her daughters. St. Augustine said that the thing which pleases passes quickly, and that which pains remains forever. And by this he meant that even hard-headed business men often make the exchange of a sinful pleasure enduring for the moment, at the risk of eternal pain.

This saying may be applied to the daughter whose temptation nowadays is to win false admiration at the risk of innocence. She is attacked like most of the women of today, with the leprosy of dress; she wears clothes to entice; to win the eyes of men; forgetting all the time that men love not the immodest woman but kneel in humble tribute to the woman adorned with her good life. This is the evil today with the daughters of the house and it is the duty of the mother to rule her home in modesty, purity and innocence. When clothes are worn not for warmth but for color; not to hide the body but to show it; not to protect maidens from the lecherous looks of loose men but to attract such, then we are confronted with what the Scripture calls "the leprosy of dress," and sooner or later putrid spots of the disease may be found on the soul.

If the boy looks to his mother in reverence and love and keeps himself in the narrow path because she taught him at her knee the law of his God,

all the more important and just is it to expect that the mother's influence will deter her daughter from the "leprosy of dress" which is epidemic, and slaying more souls than the Spanish Influenza slew bodies.

Agreement between husband and wife is true riches, the greatest wealth, and is necessary if the home is to be ruled well. If concord reigns, poverty has no burdens; low station in life is blessed by peace and joy; the two-story house in the side street is the home of keenest pleasure, and over it smile skies forever calm. On the contrary, those who lose concord and spend their lives in disagreeable quarreling, even though they be rich with all the gold and diamonds in the mines of the earth, are poorer than you, and their banquet tables groan with untouched delicacies. Their palates are soured by discord. There is a heart vacuum in such homes. Peace has folded her wings and fled, shielding her face from the frowns that scandalize little children.

The husband suspects evil of the wife, and both are planning how to say biting things, how to wound the heart and salt the wound. The bitterness of gall is the portion of such a husband and wife who will not agree one with the other in mutual forbearance; who will not recognize their faults and, at least, compromise. If the home is not absolutely built on compromises, still it is true that tranquillity in a home is very often saved by it. Trials must infallibly come. The love of husband and wife will be sorely tried, but these trials, if accepted humbly by both parties, will draw them nearer each other and closer to God. There must be a sincere, good purpose in family

Agreement Between Husband and Wife

troubles or else you are forced to admit that God torments His people just to see them wriggle, and this would be utter blasphemy.

God's grace is ours all the time, let us hope, but more abundantly when we are in trouble. Then, though the soul be agonized and the eyes red with salt tears, God is near with His wealth of grace. Take the wealth at the small price of tears. As a result peace will rule your home; domestic serenity will be strengthened at every repression of anger. Choke down the savage word and you make your home happier. You come back to it from your day's work not with ill feelings of resentment, but as the sailor boy comes home from the storms of the sea. Consolation is yours here and nowhere else, and a smiling wife will smooth out the furrows on your brow.

Will the wise wife bother her husband with domestic difficulties encountered during the day? Will she not rather let him grumble and moan awhile over the troubles of his daily work and then when a good supper has been eaten, and the old pipe lighted, and the book or newspaper opened, she may entertain him with the story of the huckster who cheated her as she bought beans, or how Johnny fought with the bad boy next door and gave him a bloody nose. There is a simple prudence needed in the wife, and the first rule of it is the one mysteriously handed down from generation to generation of women, that the quickest road to a man's heart is via a comfortably lined stomach. The application of this homely truth would have prevented much unpleasant quarreling and certainly saved some sensational family his-

tories from being aired in the divorce courts.

Far back in the fourth century, St. Chrysostom urged this concord and prudence on husband and wife. He says that when peace and love bind together man and wife, all riches is theirs and the happiness of their home is protected by a solid, unbreakable wall.⁷

The children are quick to notice quarrels between mother and father. Also, they notice the tranquillity of their homes just as readily, and will imitate the one as they will the other. Introduce this peace into your home if you have lost it, and if you have always kept it, thank God for His larger bounty to you and yours. He has been very good to you. And the best of all this peace is the knowledge that somewhere in the future your children will enjoy it, because they will imitate you in striving for it.

There can be no doubt but that when you really prefer God to all other things in your home-life, even to the petty gratification of overcoming your wife or husband in a quarrel, His divine generosity will richly reward you.

◀ With a husband in the home who loves his wife as Christ loved the Church; with a wife and mother in whom can be verified what the Scripture says of the valiant woman; with love, mutual help, and good example to sons and daughters; with God as the foundation—tell me, if you can, of a world more beautiful, more happy, more blessed in the sight of God and His Angels, of Christ and His Mother, than this little world of home? ▶

⁷Homily xxxviii, on *Genesis*.

CHAPTER V

HAPPINESS AT HOME

HOME is the source of our happiness and yet it is passing strange how men will forever seek happiness otherwheres. Why is this mistake made?

Every one ardently desires to be happy. Such a desire is the expression of the fundamental tendency of our nature. Man is not self-sufficient. He needs things, he needs a hand to hold his, a shoulder to rest against when he is weak, a breast to weep on when he is sorrowful. Man is a dependent creature and the mistake of many, many men is in thinking that they can do very well without assistance either from God or man.

Naturally then, these unfortunates consider that they can attain complete happiness in this life. They investigate the things around them—satisfy the eye, the ear, the touch, the tongue and the sight—and still remain with unquenched thirst for happiness. They tested the world and its wonders, found them good and beautiful, but like the moisture on the parlor window when the thermometer registers thirty below, or like the wild rose that delights for a day and then droops and dies these joys are fleeting, mere feathers blown in air. The moisture may be wiped off easily. The flower dies the moment it matures.

While we stand admiring a rose, the sun begins to scorch it, the wind pulls at the petals, insects eat out its honeyed heart. Such is happiness, obtained from the world, as fleeting as the rose, as easily wiped away as the moisture on the window. Very aptly may we apply to happiness what Herrick said of the flower:

And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

Like the flowers we too, are but the transient beings of a few moments.

The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherits, shall dissolve:
And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a wreck behind! We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.¹

The thought makes us pause, but it should not discourage. Indeed, it is a blessing from God to have experienced the unhappiness of the world, or rather to have arrived at the conclusion that the things around us can give only an evanescent joy. We are not really creatures of a day and neither is our happiness, for which we yearn with all the power of an immortal soul, a thing of a few years. We are made for God. He alone can satisfy us. He gave us being that He might finally give us Himself.

There is happiness in life, but to despair when we search up and down the ways of life and find

¹Shakespeare.

it not, is absurd. You searched in the wrong places. You should ask a few knowing persons: "Where can I be happy?" It is foolishness to imagine that you can imitate the worldly man who searches for happiness in the things about him. Lift up your heart! God is above you! He is Happiness! "The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," says St. Paul, and only the man who can leap out of his sensuality, can be the friend of God, His son, His heir, happy in hope, and near perpetual joy even in this life. He is surely resting on solid enjoyment and unending peace who rests on the bosom of God.

O momentary grace of mortal men,
Which we more hunt for than the grace of God!
Who builds his hope in the air of men's fair looks,
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,
Ready with every nod to tumble down
Into the fatal bowels of the deep.²

Now the nearest station to Heaven and God is the happy home, where His law is observed and His love prevails. Home is the earthly abode of happiness, for there a man finds his best and sweetest joys in the society of his wife, the companionship of his children and the pleasure of welcoming friends.

Why is it that men will insist on wandering away from home in looking for happiness? It is a mystery that finds its only solution in the restlessness of men and their desire for novelty and change. Yet true happiness according to our best reasoning, and the Scriptures, and even the pagan

²Shakespeare.

writers, consists not in wanderings and novelties but in the peace that comes more from the home-world than any other. Christian happiness is not to be found in anything except a good conscience. Why, what can you find in the world that is more worth while? Look around you, with St. Cyprian, and uncover for yourself the "shadows of this shrouded world." You will pity men, and thank God for permitting you to escape the world reeking with blood, infested with savagery, defiled by all that is foulest in the actions of man.

Look at the cities and the rush for happiness that makes anemic day of golden night and puts the stars to shame when men grovel in the glare of false light while the heavens are calm, pure, serene—an example for the higher creature to follow.

Cyprian pictures vividly the debasing effect of gladiatorial games in his day, and many things he says may be applied to the young and strong of today, who, searching for the fleece of happiness, slay themselves, their manhood and their souls, in the great game of modern life.

"The body," says he, "is nourished with strong foods, and the huge bulk of limbs thrives in its brawn and muscle, in order that the pampered victim may die a costlier death. . . . In the flower of their age, beautiful in person, and in costly robes, they dress themselves alive for their voluntary funeral. . . . They fight with beasts not for their crimes but for their madness. Fathers are spectators of their own sons; a brother is in the ring and his sister close by; and though the increased grandeur of the spectacle makes additional expense, yet, alas, even the

mother supplies that increase, that she too may be present at her own woes."³

Shall we mention the havoc wrought among men by theatres? Is happiness to be sought where wickedness parades shamelessly? The vices of paganism are not the source of a Christian's happiness, and the theatre holds up a mirror in which are reflected all the disgraceful, mischievous, and contaminating actions of humankind, while the bill-boards loudly proclaim: "What has been done, may be done once again! See, how you may sin!"

Cyprian condemned in strong, emphatic language the vices of his day. As you read this, ask yourself if it is as true now:

"There is no fear of the laws; no apprehension of inquisitor or judge; what can be paid for is not dreaded; the offense is, among the guilty to be guiltless; he who does not imitate the bad, offends them. Law has made a compact with crime, and guilt has become legal by becoming public. What sense of shame, what probity can exist, where bad men have none to condemn them, and where none are found but ought to be condemned?"⁴ And in all this, man is anxious to find his happiness. "Sin smiles with a face of gladness, but a deep woe is under the treacherous attraction."

The joy of a Christian cannot be in these things. It consists first in the forgiveness of his sins and in a good and holy conscience. St. Bernard asks: "What is richer, what is sweeter for the soul, what is more soothing on earth and more secure than a good conscience?" And among the pagan philosophers this same idea was prevalent. Cicero says to Torquatus that a good conscience is "the greatest consolation in misfortune," while

³*On the Grace of God.* ⁴*Ibid.*

Seneca remarks that other joys do not fill the breast but only ease our frowns; and to the man anxious for true joy, he says that it comes from a good conscience, from upright counsels, from good deeds, from the continual pursuit of an even road in life whereon man should walk with high contempt for accidental misfortunes that beset every one.

The second root of Christian happiness is the fear of the Lord. "The fear of the Lord," says Holy Scripture, "is honor and glory and gladness, and a crown of joy.—The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy and gladness, and length of days."⁵ St. John Chrysostom explains that the fear of the Lord is a permanent and immovable joy and helps only to happiness so much so that we are not affected by evils, since the man who fears God as he should and puts his trust in Him, has enriched himself with the root of all delights, and has discovered the sparkling spring of happiness.

Friendship with God and union with Him in prayer will bring us joy, but here we can be selfish and follow the advice of Our Lord when He said: "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."⁶ Just as the consideration of our sins and the fear of judgment make us sad, so we can rejoice in balancing our good deeds and the reward that is awaiting us.

These promises of Scripture are born out in the total ruin of the man who seeks his happiness in the gay highways of the world, forgetting God; forced to lull himself into a pathetic oblivion of the truth and beauty around him in order that like the Prodigal he may enjoy his false happiness

⁵*Ecclus.* iii. ⁶*Matt.* v, 12.

far from God. Is wealth anything but an incumbrance? Is honor more than a bubble? Are the pleasures of the forbidden world more than vinegar and gall? Does the company of our admirers and flatterers and fellow fools on the flowery path bring us entertainment or disgust? Where is that serenity, peace and content which should accompany happiness? No! In God and His law is your hope for joy, and seeking it anywhere else is simply putting the dagger to your breast, the poison to your lips, and at the end there is always the haunting fear in the bad man's soul that his mite of joy will be only a trembling leaf soon to be blown away on a careless wind, leaving him with the dry twig and the dust of his regrets.

Reflecting on the saying that the Psalmist's foot had almost slipped when he saw the prosperity of sinners, St. Augustine says: "He wished to be happy here, whereas happiness is not here. For happiness is a real good and a great good, but it has its own region. Christ came from the land of happiness, and not even He found it on earth. He was scorned and mocked, taken prisoner, scourged, loaded with chains, struck by the hand of man, defiled by spittle, crowned with thorns, hung to a cross: and at last of the Lord *are the issues of death*. . . . Why, then, do you, a servant, seek happiness in a place where the issues of death are of the Lord?" >

He then goes on to explain how the temptation to slip away from the ways of God, had come upon the Psalmist. Looking round about him, he was suddenly aware that the good which he was striving for by serving God faithfully, evil

men enjoyed in as marked degree as he did and still persisted in their wickedness. He said to himself: "I worship God; they blaspheme God. They are prosperous; I am wretched. Where is justice?"

St. Augustine rebukes the Psalmist for even weighing in the balance such divers things as God's service and temporal prosperity; "on which service of God, he had put a low price indeed when he sought to exchange it for temporal prosperity. . . . Have I desired riches which are passing and perishable? What have I desired? Gold, the mustiness of the earth? Silver, the strife of the earth? Honor, the smoke of time? These are the things which I desired from Thee upon the earth, and because I saw them in the hands of sinners, my feet were almost moved, and my steps had well-nigh slipped."⁷

The generality of mankind will find their happiness in the home-world.

But happy they! the happiest of their kind!
Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate
Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend.⁸

Peace and plenty are the home's great goods even as they are of the city. Cardinal Bellarmine says that peace without plenty is the secure possession of misery. While plenty without peace is a happiness doubtful and uncertain. Only when the home enjoys both peace and plenty can it be completely happy and peace will be the result of a good conscience, the fear and love of God. Plenty must come from hard work. So in the home, if we are to build ourselves a monument

⁷Sermon xix. ⁸Young.

to happiness, we must work and be observant of God's law.

In the house of a happy man no one is idle. He will follow the example of St. Charles Borromeo who portioned out each one's work in such a way that there was not a quarter of an hour free to any one during the time of labor. What must result from this industry and energy? The happy home will be happier, for there will be order, quiet, efficient progress. The house will resound with the laugh of happy toilers and the passer-by will stay his steps to rejoice in the merry tones. Ease destroys families and work makes them happy. Pain and toil are the test of all real worth.

There is the work of the wife and daughters in the kitchen, and though it requires courage to say this, still it is true, that the woman in the house is not a good wife or mother unless she can take care of the kitchen. Put the matter more bluntly. "Though your wife may know how to play on all the musical instruments and rival a prima donna, she is not well educated unless she can boil an Irish potato and broil a mutton-chop, since the diet sometimes decides the fate of families and nations."⁹

And if you ask yourself: "Who are the great men of today and why are they great?" you can answer: "For the most part they descended from industrious mothers, who, in the old homestead, used to spin their own yarn, and weave their own carpets, and plait their own door-mats, and flag their own chairs, and do their own work. The stalwart men and the influential women of this day, ninety-one out of every hundred of them,

⁹Talmage.

came from such an illustrious ancestry of hard knuckles and homespun."¹⁰

All this toil will be of no avail if God has not the first place. His precepts should be our mould in which to form the children and ourselves. There can be no poverty where God is, and the world will appear but a mean thing if you found your happiness in God. "Ceilings embellished with gold," says Cyprian, "mansions encrusted with slabs of precious marble, will seem poor, when you feel that it is yourself who is to be waited on, to be garnished, that you are your own better house, wherein the Lord sits as in a temple, and where the Holy Ghost has begun to dwell. Let us array that house with the colors of innocence, and illumine it with the light of justice; age will not decay it; the colors on its walls will not change their lustre, nor the gold lose its brightness. All tinselled things are transitory . . . but this remains in a dress ever fresh, in honor untarnished, in brilliancy perpetual."¹¹

So do not look far and wide in the highways for happiness. You will find it first in your own soul and in the world of home.

"Here below the human race has different kinds of enjoyment," according to St. Augustine, "and any man is called miserable when that which he cares for is taken away from him. Men therefore, love various things, and when a man seems to have that which he likes he is called happy. But the truly happy man is he who loves what is worthy of love, not he who possesses the object of his desires. For many men are rather to be pitied for having what they love than for being deprived of it." Here the Saint brings up the example of

¹⁰*Ibid.* ¹¹*The Grace of God.*

the Gentiles whom God delivered up to the evil desires of their hearts, while at the same time He refused to listen to the Apostle Paul praying to be delivered from the sting of the flesh. "He granted their request," says Augustine, "for their condemnation, and refused St. Paul for his good. But when we love that which God would have us love, He will most surely give it to us."¹²

The tall tree is not bothered by the grass at its roots, and so the Psalmist says that the wicked are sprung up like grass, but the just like the palm-tree. The grass withered and the flower fallen, is the story of the brief empty prosperity of sinners compared with the solid abiding joys of the just even though grief and sorrow be their portion. Men lead bad lives and flourish. Our next-door neighbor may be a villain and yet own a handsome limousine. You go off to work every day struggling to keep clothes on the backs of your children and bread on the dining table. In one malicious manoeuvre your neighbor will make ten thousand dollars. You, if you are virtuous, will make twelve hundred dollars a year. To you ten thousand would be a fortune. It would repulse all dangers of hunger, thirst and nakedness. It would give your boy or girl an education. It would give your wife a vacation at Atlantic City. But you are virtuous and the price of a peck of potatoes worries you.

And all the while you have but to lift the parlor curtain to see the limousine, splendid evidence of prosperity in your neighbor's house next-door. Will you murmur in your heart thus: "O God, I serve Thee and am obedient to Thy law. Do the wicked find favor with Thee? Dost Thou

¹²*On Psalm xxvi, 6.*

hate the good?" Then you are near serious temptation and the footsteps of your desires are close to the heels of the wicked man. Then remember this saying of the Psalmist: "O Lord, how great are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep." <No depth of ocean can compare with the thought of God in His rule over men. St. Augustine uses the following comparison to show how foolish you are in envying the neighbor his car and wealth. "Do not share the pleasure of the fish who is relishing his food. It is true the fisherman has not drawn in his line, but already the fish is biting at the hook. . . . You are thinking of your own short days upon earth and would have all things fulfilled during their brief course. What are these things? That all the wicked should be condemned, and all the good be crowned. Would you see these things in this life of yours? God will carry them out in His own time."¹³>

True it is, that no one is happy in his heart whose conscience is stinging him. Envy of the neighbor is a sting, but put down the parlor curtain, walk back through the quiet shaded parlor; gaze on the contented face of your wife and the happy faces of your children; and then ask yourself if your heart is happier here in the homeness than afar in the world with all riches, honor, offices and power at your command. Limousines may glide by you noiselessly, their occupants befurred and be-laced and not noticing you or your home, but, alas, limousines do not always carry happy hearts and many of their owners have never had your blessing of a home.

¹³On Psalm xci.

CHAPTER VI

DEALS WITH THE BEAUTY OF AGE; THE FAMILY ALBUM AND BABY SHOES; OLD CRADLES; HIGH-CHAIRS; GO-CARTS, AND LACE-CAPS.

OLD things are always attractive. If beauty does not mark them with interest, age generally has softened the rough edges and made the thing presentable. An old ship may be nothing but a rotting hulk, yet you would walk far to see bows that have nosed the seven seas when your grandfather was a bare-legged urchin. Old streets lined with weather-stained houses are in an atmosphere peculiar to themselves. Especially if there are ancient trees with tremendous, spreading branches, standing along the curb. Many New England villages and towns rejoice in such dreamy streets, but it is in the city, New York, say, that the contrast stands out suddenly like an old man's smile on a baby's face. It startles you. Everything is so intensely modern all around.

Fifth Avenue is a swiftly moving stream of automobiles in the centre, well dressed, spruce, briskly walking pedestrians on either sidewalk, and yet a step down the side streets lifts you into another world. The grandeur of these old houses has departed. Signs for boarders glare at you from ornate fronts gone to rust and drab gentility. Time has been cruel in moving so persistently uptown. Certainly it is passing strange to be lost in revery before a Colonial doorway

and suddenly be warned out of the road by a limousine's siren, or to be distracted heavenward by the whirr of an aeroplane. You have seen very old men sitting on the shady sidewalk of some by-street watching the restless youngsters rush here and there in a game of kick-the-wicket. It is exactly the same thing with an old house, or anything old, in fact, in New York City.

Old churches too, have their fascination. Old china, old furniture, old fenders, old stove-lifters used, perhaps, by William Penn in his wonderful brick house on the Schuylkill are attractive in their own order. Old andirons are particularly romantic, for they speak of a grate-fire that is dead and—who knows?—they may have been toyed with by shy lovers gazing into the embers for the future, or used to crack a man's head in the gentlemanly days of the past.

Independence Hall, for instance, and Faneuil Hall are good examples of the houses. Old St. Joseph's Church in Philadelphia is a wonderful example of the churches. Why, the city simply built around this church and forgot it. You must go up an alley to get to it and if you do not know just where Willing's Alley is, you will never find the church, for no one on Chestnut Street, even though you are right opposite the church, will have any idea of its whereabouts. Martha Washington's china cups and saucers; George Washington's wine-set at Georgetown University; the same College's collection of lace and glassware and signatures, and the things mentioned above, will surely convey the idea that old things, even robbed of beauty, have their power of attracting attention.

Now it has always seemed to me that this attention is very different from that we pay to modern things. This attention may be romantic, a voice from the dead, a warning for the future, and all that, but principally the difference between old things and modern things is not more than a difference of time and emotion. We laugh at our ancestors and our posterity will laugh at us. Some day the airplane will be old and subways a thing of romantic interest. But while we are the ones looking at the old things, the interest in them is emotional for ourselves and, for that reason, I have a preference for old photographs, daguerreotypes and tintypes, while my friend, the learned theologian, Dr. Holden, prefers old shoes. You never can tell how queer a man is until you have found out his hobbies. Ask what a man loves and you will know why he lives. Dr. Holden let me look into his soul one day, and I shall tell you about it later.

Take down the family album. Turn its pages at random and look at your grandfather's or your grandmother's face, and see if you don't feel queer around the heart. You will certainly smile. Now (but do this quietly!) look at your father's picture when he was courting your mother. Did you ever see your father showing that picture around? Perhaps he wore a marvellous beard and perhaps she was dressed in a wonderful skirt. You notice how he stands about three feet from the circumference of the skirt where it spreads, balloon-like, on the floor. Such a skirt nowadays would make, well—how many dresses?

She is sitting and he is standing. She holds a parasol and he shows clearly that he does not

know just what to do with his other hand. One is securely anchored on the back of her chair but he looks as if he had a hand too many. He is very self-conscious for all his fierce whiskers. Perhaps he leans on a cane, not a modern pencil but a dog-killer. His hat is almost poetic, especially if it be one of those straw affairs with a floating wing out of the side. His trousers are truly so. But the Brummellian touch in his whole dress is the expansive tie, a cravat, you know, and the wide heavy rim of gold that stretches across his manly chest. The rim of gold is a watch chain. Nowadays such a chain would make several wrist watches and the seal, a pair of cuff links and a K. of C. emblem besides.

She wears the cutest, smallest hat, something like a small boy's derby with a feather in it. (You will pardon me, I know, but I cannot describe a lady's hat with any accuracy.) This hat is the climax or apex of a costume which seems to be built on wide foundations with a tapering roof. No disrespect, but the old daguerreotypes and tintypes were truthful. At least in all things but the rouge on her cheeks and the colors superadded by the artist. That rouge on the tintype was the only rouge your mother or grandmother ever wore. Even the artist saw no need of penciling your mother's eyebrows or carmining her lips.

But you do not look so intently at your mother's dress. That brings a smile even to her old eyes. Watch her as you show her the picture. Yes! See! She smiled. You are enthralled by the face. Oh, her youth of the olden days, come back again and take her wrinkles away and smooth her cheeks and put the red glow of health there

again and the flash back into her eyes and take away the gray from her hair and put back the self-conscious look she had when she was sitting for her picture with her young, stalwart, nervous and bewhiskered lover. Oh, put them all back, yea, even the tie and the chain; yea, even the *long* dresses and the *wee* hat with the feather! Youth and love and throbbing life and the simple purity of soul!

So the old pictures talk and sensibly, too, but we are like New York and the old houses; like Chestnut Street and old St. Joseph's Church. The rush of life dims the voice of the past.

Some of the faces in your family album are remarkably strong faces. The eyes of the men are stern, fearless, maybe a little careless of danger. This will be more apparent if the eyes are Irish. It is true of all, for the immigrant was a bold man, and if you are from the stock of Americans who came over from the old countries in the dawn of the continent's history, the same will be true since your forefathers were, even as their later followers, immigrants. Time does not change the nature of the thing itself. America is a country of immigrants. The only native American is an Indian.

You will notice, too, that the women in your old album have a certain delightful quality about their faces. All are serene-looking, quiet, contented, beautiful. They had such a busy time raising large, healthy families that they could not grow old fast. They had no empty hands to worry over, no empty cradles, no empty high-chairs, no childless homes. This, by the way, is a contradiction, for no true home is childless even

when God denies a young couple children. The Infant Jesus reigns there and is a comforting Child. In other cases, where the Lord does not deny children, well—what do you think if the home is empty? Certainly few hands were idle in the old days and few people died young. Serene women and bold men! Beautiful mothers and strong fathers! And work to keep the devil away! All this the album shows you.

Surely old photographs are interesting.

I said something about old shoes. This must be a secret between you and me, for Dr. Holden, the learned theologian, may not like to have this story repeated. Nowadays, everybody might not appreciate it and any sort of family emotion is frowned down in modern times. This is the story of the old shoes as Dr. Holden told it:

"One day I walked home from the rectory and found my old mother sewing in the sitting room upstairs. You know the house. Quiet, small, with an old chestnut tree looking in at the window. She sits there in the bay-window and sews for Mary's children.

"Well, I chatted for a time and then she said:

" 'Jim, you need a sleep. Your eyes are tired.'

"I really was tired so I took her advice and went into my old room to stretch out in Dad's Morris chair. The nap was short and I began to rummage in the wardrobe, looking up some school books for a boy I have in hand. I came across a box and opening it, found ten pairs of baby shoes. They had been misplaced, surely, for I never saw them in my cupboard before. There were eight in our family and you could pick out the six boys' shoes right away. Perhaps even

at the tender age of ten months or so the boys did more kicking than the girls. Anyway, the shoes were more worn. But the colors! Red and lavender; green and baby blue! I just tossed them around to see how many colors were represented in the box.

"There was a name on the sole of each shoe, put there many years ago, and I had a quiet game all to myself trying to pick out whose shoes they were just from looking at them. But I was wrong on the very first pair. They were about as long as my little finger, and wide at the top. All the buttons were off except the top button. 'Aha,' said I, 'that proves a fat leg, for the top button refused to meet over the bulging muscles and so this pair belongs to my older brother, John. He always was the biggest in the family.' Smiling at my deductions, I turned over the shoe and saw my own name.

"Then in hunting for John's shoes, I made another bad guess and picked out Joe's. No one would have thought that feet which had worn such frail, fairy things as these, would ever tramp in trench mud and track the pathless ways of the Argonne Forest, ducking shells. So with Bill's and Ed's. Soldier feet in baby shoes! It was absurd! This pair marked—'*Charles, one year*' gave me pause. Charles died when he was sixteen. A fine lad, just peeking in at the door of life. His feet are walking in Heaven's soft ways and need no shoes, not even baby shoes.

"A quick glance showed me Mame's and Gertie's, but two pair remained unaccounted for. Perhaps they belonged to Aunt Mary's children. Or—but I lost patience after a moment and looked

at the name. '*John, age one year.*' John? There were two Johns in our family, Sr. and Jr. I knew my mother's handwriting and certainly this was not it. John! Why, these must be Pop's baby shoes.

"Well, you know how it is. The tight feeling that comes round the heart. So I held the little shoes in my hand and gazed at them and then at the little red pair now all alone in the box. If this pair belonged to Pop, then most likely—Yes, there it was! '*Margaret, aged 8 months.*' Margaret! Ah, well, you will understand without my going any further. Margaret, you see, is my mother. And here in my hand, taken from the box where she kept her babies' shoes, I had found hers. Time! Oh, Time! There's many a laugh on your old, grim face, but keep the scythe away from Margaret and John!"

That's why Dr. Holden likes old shoes. I thought a great deal of that learned man. Everybody in the parish did, but I wish the whole parish had been there to hear him tell of his affection for a pair of old shoes. It was not so much his words as the expression on his face. I caught this expression several times when he forgot himself, and I was reminded of the strong faces in the family album. We disagree in our preference for old things. I stick up for the tintypes, he for the old shoes, and still we both agree that old things teach good lessons. Dr. Holden is a learned man but he learns from old shoes that great learning, just like beauty or great riches, should not take away simplicity.

A famous American writer moralizes on the insufficient "flavor of humanity in the soil out of

which we grow," and bids us consider the Old World. "The ploughman turns up an old Saxon's bones," he says, "and beneath them is a tessellated pavement of the time of the Caesars. . . . It makes a man human to live on these old humanized soils. He cannot help marching in step with his kind in the rear of such a procession. They say a dead man's hand cures swellings if laid on them. There is nothing like the dead cold hands of the Past to take down our tumid egotism and lead us into the solemn flow of the life of our race."¹

Old things have a fascination for their owners that leads to extremes. Some men can never bring themselves to get rid of certain out-of-date articles. The carpet on the bedroom floor may be so worn that the pattern is traceable only in spots and that dimly, but the old Father wants the carpet because it was there when he was a boy and to do such a modern thing as to take the carpet up, put down a hard-wood floor, shellac and wax it, and then cover it lightly with a small rug, this he would never permit. The carpet has been there so long that contemplation of it day in and day out for fifty years or so has completely hypnotized him and you may as well let him alone with his old usages or there will be bickerings.

Irving describes the man who indulges his veneration for family things to "a whimsical extent." Gangs of gypsies infest his manor-house and grounds, but simply because they are ancients in the family and have been pestering them for years out of mind, he will not suffer them to be disturbed. Century-old trees are never trimmed because the birds' nests might be disturbed. Owls,

¹Holmes, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*.

because they are hereditary owls, are not molested, "Swallows have nearly choked up every chimney with their nests; martins build in every frieze and cornice; crows flutter about the towers, and perch on every weathercock; and old gray-headed rats may be seen in every quarter of the house, running in and out of their holes undauntedly in broad daylight. In short," concludes Irving, "John has such a reverence for everything that has been long in the family, that he will not hear even of abuses being reformed, because they are good old family abuses."

Now it might have been interesting to question Dr. Holden's mother about such homely things as these: First, the cradles. Where are they now? Upstairs in the unused room or still doing duty for the children of her children? Were there more than one for such a large family? Is there no way of looking at such a relic of the days when her babes were plump, ruddy, hungry and cooing things, sent down from heaven to her as the dew is sent to refresh the world? Now tell me, you mothers who are old, at least in years, tell me, where are the old cradles that were rocked so gently? What has become of all the wonderful thoughts you had when you gazed on the sleeping face of the child and looked into the future? Or perhaps you rocked the cradle with your foot and kept your hands busy with the needle and thread, mending for the boys and forever thinking, thinking as you worked. The room was dim and the soft creaking of the cradle was restful; outside, if you lived on a small street of simple homes, you heard neighborly voices talking over domestic events; or perhaps the letter-carrier rang the bell;

Where are the old cradles

or the raucous-voiced huckster shouted monotonously his—“*Cabbages! Apples! Potatoes, Tomatoes and Watermelons!*” Or did you hear the *ding-dong-bell* of the scissors-grinder as he trundled his one-wheeled cart through the street? Or perhaps the doctor’s carriage drove up across the way where some one was sick. Whatever the sounds, they were all homey and the child slept peacefully through them all, rocked in the old cradle while you mended socks. Usually, didn’t the clock chime at the end of the afternoon, when light was flickering and evening gathered its darkness, and the boys rushed in from school and out again on errands for milk and bread, grumbling all the while? (You, dear old mothers, can remember these things? Tell me then where is that cradle, for it belongs to the old things that fascinate by the marvellous associations connected with them.) On its runners may still be seen the marks of your boys’ feet as they, most unwillingly, but with great violence and speed, rocked the cradle while you prepared supper for the man of the house, now hurrying away from the shop and factory to his heaven in the side-street. The boy may have read a book of adventure while his feet worked vigorously, and sometimes perhaps, but let us hope, not often, the baby was catapulted into the air amid screams and cries from all, except the dumfounded boy. Oh, then you scolded him! Yes, even if he afterwards turned out to be a Dr. Holden, you scolded him and reached for the handy slipper! Do you remember these things in the days when the cradle was new and much occupied? (Now where is it? Can it be that the cradle-romance has ended in a few strips of broken

wood and gone to light a fire? Rather let us suppose that the cradle is yet in the family, a revered object like the shoes and photos.

We may ask other impertinent questions of these old mothers? For instance, where are the high-chairs? The go-carts? The funny bits of frills called lace-caps that surrounded the boy's head and even then looked out of place on a man. Usually it was a pink cap and a blue coat, for the boy, or am I wrong? At any rate, I have never yet seen a male baby who looked comfortable in a lace-cap. Watch one pull at it and wrinkle its face in scorn of such feminine frippery!

Now the high-chairs may still be in that interesting attic room and if you investigate the lid that used to come down over the child's head you will make some remarkable discoveries as to the characteristics of your children. The flap will be dented in many places. You know who did that? That was Bill who hammered his saucer and spoon at the same time and with both hands when he wanted more! The dents came naturally. Perhaps you will find the hinges of the flap very loose. That shows how Johnny used to lift the flap and bang it down again tirelessly just to hear the noise. What cared he how he imperilled his flesh-creased neck! Or whether Pop was napping upstairs? And that mended place in the chair is evidence of the day when the girl baby was investigating the cat's actions in washing its face, and becoming absorbed, over she leaned, and still further over, till the chair went over too. Oh, the dreadful clamor! and you can show your daughter the mark that fall left.

I confess to great and deplorable ignorance in

Where are the High Chairs and Go Carts?

regard to those colored coats and shawls and things which used to be put round the baby, but they would tell a story of the past for you old mothers and would renew your youth for you and bring many sweet smiles to your faces. Every well-worn and well-torn garment belonged to the boys, that is certain; for somehow or other it seems the fate of the male in this life to be rough even when he is a baby. Evidence the poor lace-caps! And the fancy dresses that you made with such fond reflections on the arrival of this greatest baby! Shreds and tatters if ever they clothed the solid muscles of the boys!

So now let the old mothers who read this book on home, sit them down and think on the past and the relics of it in these cradles and shoes and high-chairs and lace-caps and baby-clothes. The meditation will be fruitful in prayers of thanks to God for His goodness. But your hearts will pain you. That past has gone long ago. You sit there now near the window and try to sew, but some one has to thread your needle. You hear the noises in the street, but the voices of your children are strangely silent. Everything around you is so quiet. Would to God that you could see your child's face again as it looked in the old days, so placid and peaceful and innocent in the cradle! It's all gone and still you can thank God, for He has been good to any mother in giving her a little child, in making her home a Bethlehem and in putting into her life even one Christmas, when the boy or girl was born.

You still have the pictures. Take out the one of yourself and your whiskered lover. Take out the one of yourself and the baby in your arms.

Look at the one of the three children's heads and see how Ed kept his lips tightly pressed together simply because you told him to do so. See the photo of your daughter when she made her First Communion. Perhaps she is a holy nun and preparing other mothers' children for the same sacred rite. Look at the picture of your big boys and then kneel down quietly, and even though the house is strangely silent, even though no childish voices come to your ears, thank God for His goodness and ask Him to bless your boys and girls, and your man and yourself, and take you all into the great Home where old age is not known and we shall be forever young.

CHAPTER VII

SORROW AND DEATH IN THE HOME

IT is true that if faith and hope are wanting, a mournful despair looms prominent in sorrow. The homes of men are subjected to these floods of grief and like swelling tempests the sorrows of life beat upon us. For the Catholic there ought to be nothing like despair. Catholic faith and hope are the bold, rooted rocks withstanding the buffets of the swelling storm. Faith and hope repulse the waves and grow more firmly rooted because attacked.

The succession of joy and sorrow in our home-life welds hearts together, and that there will be joy followed by sorrow, we all know. The holy old man Simeon had been promised that he would not die before he had seen Christ. His joy must have been intense when at last he held in his arms the Infant and saw Mary, the Mother. But is it not evident that Simeon knew the end of his life was at hand? And did he not prophesy that a sword of sorrow would pierce the happy Mother's heart? Faith and hope were his, for he blessed God. Death was welcome. "Now thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace: because my eyes have seen Thy salvation."¹

The great overwhelming sorrow that visits the

¹Luke ii, 29.

home is death. This grim guest comes uninvited and takes away some part of our hearts, yet even this King of Grief cannot harm Catholic faith and hope. Death is, after all, the port of rest and eternal safety. There, tranquillity reigns, the storms and tumults of earth rumble off into the far distance. They can harm our loved ones no more.

Still, it is a fact, unnoticed but true, that when we wish our loved ones back on earth, we are wishing them back into the battle, back again among the struggling masses of men and women who are not fortunate enough to have been made welcome in the Home of Christ. "So also you now indeed have sorrow: but I will see you again," said Our Lord, "and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."² Any desire or longing that would make us blush when Christ does see us again, should be erased from our souls. Hopeless sorrow over the beloved dead is such a desire, since we want them for ourselves. The ones we love are seeing Him, their hearts are rejoicing as He promised, and their joy no man can take from them. Be content. They have gone home. Let them rest in His arms.

"Patience is as a case of armor around the heart, which deadens the blows inflicted on it; while impatience not only strips off that covering, but lays the very quick, in all its tenderness and delicacy of nerve, bare to the wounding knife."³

Yet we desire to remain on earth among these troubles. We are unwilling to give up the combat against the devil. Where is the pleasure in continuing battle, a risky battle, where the enemy is

²John xvi, 22. ³Wiseman.

so much better accoutred than we, so much more cunning. This is our inconsistency, to yearn for peace and rest, but at the same time to be unwilling to leave the earth. We should consider with St. Cyprian how unending is the strife. “Our contest is with avarice, with unchastity, with anger, with ambition. Against carnal vices and worldly allurements, we have an abiding and weary wrestling.” So many, in fact, are the points of attack; such the wily enemy, that we are always near hopelessness. “So soon as avarice has been laid low, lust rises; when lust is crushed, ambition follows; if ambition has been set at naught, anger embitters, pride inflates, drunkenness entices, envy destroys harmony and jealousy severs friendship.”⁴ Is it conceivable that when the breast is exposed to all these assaults of the Evil One, we are still unwilling to leave the battle for the glory of victory? Ought we not rather envy the dead? Our Lord has told us: “Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”⁵

St. Paul urges this glory that will come after sorrow as a solace for trial. “We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope.”⁶

“For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory.”⁷

Can it be possible that you do not wish to be freed from sorrow? Are you disinclined to hurry toward happiness? “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy,” Our Lord assures us, “and your joy no man shall take from you.” “Do you still

⁴Ibid. ⁵John xvi, 20. ⁶Rom. v, 3, 4. ⁷II Cor. iv, 17.

waver? Are your eyes still fixed tensely on the world and its sorrows? "I will see you again," says Christ, "and your heart shall rejoice." "Since therefore," urges St. Cyprian, "to see Christ is to rejoice and our joy cannot be except when we see Christ, what blindness of mind, what madness is it, to love the troubles and pains and tears of the world and not rather hurry to that joy which can never be taken from us."⁸

Christ told the Apostles that He would soon depart, and they grew sad. "If you loved Me," said Our Lord, "you would indeed be glad because I go to the Father," thus teaching us that when our loved ones depart from this world, we ought not to waste idle tears over their new joy. They have gone to the Father. Life's chains are loosed forever; the prison doors are open and the soul we love is free.

Tertullian, urging the martyrs rather to love than hate their prison, says: "For if we consider that the world itself is more a prison we shall perceive that you have gone forth rather from a prison than into one. The world has the greater darkness which binds the hearts of men. The world puts on the heavier bonds which bind the very souls of men. The world breathes forth the worse uncleanness, even the lusts of men. . . . It matters not where you are in the world, you who are doing without the world; and if you have lost any of the joys of life, it is a good business which loses something to gain more."⁹

Our beloved dead have exchanged the prison of this world for the home of heaven. Even in life it could be said of them as it ought to be said of us now, that while we may be confined in

⁸On the Mortality. ⁹To the Martyrs.

the world, yet we are free as Christians to lift our souls ever higher and higher to God. Tertullian cries out to the martyrs: "Away with the name of prison! Though the body be shut up, though the flesh be confined, all is open to the spirit. Roam freely, thou spirit! Walk to and fro, thou spirit! Not setting before thee shady walks or long corridors, but that road which leads to God. As often as thou shalt walk here in the spirit, so often shalt thou not be in prison. The leg suffers nothing in the stocks while the mind is in heaven. The mind carries about with it the whole man and removes him whithersoever it pleases. But where thy heart is, there will thy treasure be also. Let our heart then be where we would have our treasure."¹⁰

By mourning without bounds, we seem to betray our faith and hope; and while asserting that we believe our dear dead better off where they have journeyed, we deny our statement by giving way to uncontrolled grief. We believe in God's word; we hope and live in the hope of the resurrection. We are certain that we shall rise again and see those we love and mourn. Have they been annihilated? Do we believe in Christ? "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth in Me, shall not die forever."¹¹ We are confronted with the fact that eternal life cannot be enjoyed unless we die. Yes, we must die to see Christ. "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me; that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world."¹² Who is

¹⁰*On Matt.* vi, 21. ¹¹*John* xi, 25. ¹²*Ibid.* xvii, 24.

there so pleased with life and the world as to be willing to remain alive at the cost of eternal happiness?

"We are going from the moment of our birth," cries out St. Augustine.¹³ "For what man is stationary? Who is not forced to be in progress from the time of his entering on the path of life? A child is born; he walks by his growth; death is the term. We must attain that end but in gladness. Who is there who does not weep here in this evil way when the very infant begins by tears? The infant indeed, when it is born, is cast into this immense world from the small prison-house of its mother's womb, and proceeds from darkness into light, and for all that it comes out of the darkness into light it can weep, but it cannot laugh. Men both laugh and weep and their laughter is matter for weeping. One man grieves over a loss, another at his straitened circumstances, another because he is imprisoned, another because death has deprived him of one of his best beloved ones, and so it is with each. . . . The tears of the just are plentiful, but only in this world."

So it is that St. Paul urges: "We will not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you be not sorrowful even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them who have slept through Jesus, will God bring with Him."¹⁴

One often hears the complaint: "I have always tried to do my best for God, and He has taken away my only child. Why does God afflict those who are serving Him? The bad suffer not half so much as the good."

¹³Sermon xxxi. ¹⁴I Thess. iv. 12.

This is an age-old complaint and touches the deep problem of the existence of evil in the world. Faith is required to understand the solution. Death and sorrow lay their clammy hands on the good as well as the bad, and our complaint, that we who are good ought not to suffer in the same way as the bad, presupposes that the good ought to enjoy worldly happiness, untouched by evil. We should be allowed to revel gaily in present joys and look ahead with delight on the heaven reserved for us. We really mean that the bad should have all the suffering and the good all the pleasures.

Now a good man's joy ought to be spiritual. His *soul* should be glad. No evil man is ever happy in soul, though his face may be wreathed in smiles. But no matter how heavy the load of sorrow placed on the good man's shoulders, his soul is happy simply because he is good. This is the difference which we forget. We attend to externals only. We see the wreathing smiles only. The good man's frowns do not betoken unhappiness.

Here is a significant reflection on the matter of carrying the crosses God gives us. "Taking up one's cross means simply that you are to go the road which you see to be the straight one; carrying whatever you find is given you to carry, as well and stoutly as you can; without making faces, or calling people to come and look at you. Above all, you are neither to load nor unload yourself; nor cut your cross to your own liking." Some people think it would be better for them to have it large; and many that they could carry it much faster if it were small; and even those who like

it largest are usually very particular about its being ornamental, and made of the best ebony. But all that you have really to do is to keep your back as straight as you can; and not think about what is upon it—above all, not to boast of what is upon it."¹⁵

Human sorrows are common to all mankind, good and bad alike. Blindness, paralysis, deafness, lunacy, and all evils without exception, are common inheritances from Adam. Disease and death grew out of the apple, out of the pride of our parent Adam. "Wherefore, until this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality,"¹⁶ and the Spirit guide us to God the Father, whatsoever are the troubles of the flesh, are the common portion of mankind. When therefore the earth pines in an unfruitful barrenness, famine makes no difference one way or the other; when any city is occupied by a hostile assault, the capture lays its desolation equally upon all. And when the becalmed atmosphere suspends the rain, there is equal drought to all, and when the jutting rocks dash the vessel to pieces, the voyagers, without exception, suffer shipwreck."¹⁷ But the good Christian must prepare himself for still greater sufferings than the wicked are forced to endure. "For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation."¹⁸

Job lost his riches and his children; endured horrible sufferings of body and mind, and strongly persisted in his allegiance to God. "Then Job rose up, and rent his garments, and having shaven his head, fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said: Naked came I out of my

¹⁵Ruskin, *Ethics of the Dust*. ¹⁶I Cor. xv, 53. ¹⁷St. Cyprian, *ibid*.
¹⁸*Ecclus.* ii, 5.

mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done. Blessed be the Name of the Lord."¹⁹

And when Job's wife urged him to curse God and die, he answered her: "Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women. If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?"²⁰

The good man Tobias, had served God by many works of mercy, and was then afflicted with blindness. Still, continuing to bless God in the days of evil as he had done in prosperous times, Tobias was impatient with the complaints of his relations: "Where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms, and buriedst the dead?" But Tobias rebuked them saying: "Speak not so: for we are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him."²¹

What is the approval which God stamps upon a man like Tobias? How does God regard the patient suffering of evils? He sends His Angel to comfort and heal. "When thou didst pray with tears," said Raphael to Tobias, "and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord. And because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee. And now the Lord hath sent me to heal thee, and to deliver Sara thy son's wife from the devil. For I am the Angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord."²²

To be patient in adversity is a Christian virtue.

¹⁹Job i, 20, 21. ²⁰Ibid, ii, 10. ²¹Tob. ii, 16-18. ²²Ibid, xii, 12.

The Jews did not grasp its meaning for they were ever murmuring against God. You sometimes look for a great thing you can give God. Listen to the Psalm: "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."²³

Give this broken spirit to God; offer your tears for the dead; your bitter disappointments for the living; your blasted hopes and your life of failure. Offer this and He will send an Angel Raphael to receive your sacrifice and bear it to Him where He sits governing all things well. We are not failures when God afflicts us. The contrary is true, for because we are acceptable to God, therefore does He send us sufferings. No man is a failure who is successful in the sight of God. "For the Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart, and with all your soul, or not."²⁴ Think of the test to which God put Abraham, when He demanded the sacrifice of his only son. You murmur and weep and are inconsolable when the common law of disease and death has claimed your son. What would you do if you were told by God to take your son and slay him?

St. Paul says that he is made a better man by the uses of adversity because by enduring evil things he is more and more proved. "And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord, that it might depart from me. And He said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly therefore will

²³Ps. 1. ²⁴Deut. xiii, 3.

I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."²⁵

Where is the skill of the pilot needed most and most revealed if not in the storm that threatens thousands of lives? Is not the bravery of the soldier shown in the heat of battle? The airplane must risk the ascent before it can fly over cities, and those are weak trees which have not resisted the howling storm. No birds should build in trees that have been thus unmoved, for when the storm does come, the nest will be ruined with the tree. Those who do not know God cannot understand suffering and sorrow. Their lives are filled with murmurings, and only the desolate riches of complaints are stored away for them, while true Christians are made strong amid suffering. Our merit, let us pray, is heaped high because we have shed tears and known grief.

After all, today's sorrows are little things. They will pass away quickly like all things of earth. They are only the reflections of the sad yesterdays, for the human race is the same in all ages, and while it keeps stumbling and walking haltingly toward God and Judgment, to-day's grief is but a mirror of sorrows centuries old.

The plague that forced the following words from St. Cyprian would seem to be like the Spanish Influenza of our day. Certainly if you were not told who was speaking and in what age he lived, you would easily believe that some sage of to-day was voicing his regrets and uttering his advice on the modern pestilence. In the middle of the third century a plague of particular violence spread among the people and lasted for twelve dreadful years. "This present visitation," says St. Cyprian,

²⁵II Cor. xii, 7-9.

"of the strength of the body drained by an inward flux; of fire in the marrow breaking out in wounds upon the jaws; of the entrails shaken by continual vomiting; the eyes made bloodshot by fever; the feet of some, or other parts of the body removed through excess of putrid disease; while from the debility occasioned by this maiming and waste of the body, either motion is impeded, or hearing obstructed, or sight lost—all this, is a profitable instance of faith. What greatness is it of spirit to battle in strength of soul unshaken, against these assaults of desolation and death! How glorious to stand unbending among the ruins of the human race instead of lying prostrate with those who have no hope in God."²⁶

Rather does he urge us to turn the mind to the benefits of death. "Behold virgins depart peaceably and securely in their full honors, unafraid of the threats and corruptions and polluted places of the coming Anti-Christ. Boys, escaped the peril of their unsafe years, happily arrive at the reward of continence and innocence. The delicate matron is no longer in dread of torture, by an early death winning ransom from fear of persecution and the tormenting hands of the slaughterer. By the terrors of death in these days, lukewarm men are heartened; the listless nerved; the sluggish awakened; deserters from the faith compelled to return; heathens brought to believe; the congregations of established believers brought to rest; fresh and numerous champions are banded in heartier strength for the conflict, and having come into warfare in the season of death, they will fight without fear of death when the battle comes."²⁷

The fear of death and the pain of suffering

²⁶*On the Mortality.* ²⁷*Ibid.*

will always be with us. But shut out the fear of death! Look beyond the sable doors and see the life we were born to enjoy! Why fool with the bauble, the toy of a moment, when the simple passing from one room of life into another room of heaven; from the dark room to the room brilliant with the light that floods from the Face of God, will give us the reality of joy, the payment of suffering, God for eternity!

The days of suffering are days in the mint when we coin gold that will buy Heaven. There is nothing in the world that should make us stay. We are strangers. We are journeying. Heaven is the resting place. The journey is across the world and the battle against ambushing enemies is continual and long. Heaven is the enjoyment of victory. No matter how far we wander up and down the roads of the world, there is ever the thought of home and our return. We bless the prospering winds that speed our ship to the native shore. We bless the smooth level road over which our journey lies, with the lights of home ahead. The ones we loved are waiting our embrace. See, they are all smiles and tears at our return. What! Did we imagine they were to be mourned when we were the wanderers! They prayed God anxiously for us and our safe return and we were wishing *them* back on the road, back on the restless ocean with us! Strange perversity of truth! Heaven is our home, our native land; a goodly company awaits us, parents, father and mother, our children, wives, brothers and sisters, friends and relations. The great and good of all times and all countries are there on the threshold. They are secure, at peace, at home. Hurry to

them! Embrace them! *You* were the lost one; *you* had strayed. Now you too are back home, in the arms you longed for, with lips pressed to yours in a love that is deathless, in a home where are no more terrors and where life itself can never end. Oh, may God receive us all at the gate of His great Home!

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEATH OF THE YOUNG

THE prophet Jeremias mourning over the ruin wrought by the Chaldaeans on the people of Jerusalem, speaks thus: "Hear therefore, ye women, the word of the Lord, and let your ears receive the word of His mouth; and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbor mourning. For death is come up through our windows; it is entered into our houses, to destroy the children from without, the young men from the streets. Speak: Thus saith the Lord: Even the carcass of man shall fall as dung upon the face of the country, and as grass behind the back of the mower, and there is none to gather it. Thus saith the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, for I am the Lord that exercise mercy and judgment and justice in the earth; for these things please Me, saith the Lord."¹

The mother who has suddenly felt her babe's body grow cold; who has seen the bright eyes dim and fix into a glassy stare; who has felt the convulsive straightening of the little form, and on a sudden, realized that the child for whom she went

¹Jer. ix, 20-24.

down into the valley of the shadow of death, is now dead—she will know how hard it is to see the young die. Death has chilled all her joy and laid it, a pitifully small mould, in the senseless arms of the earth.

Our home-world must experience the death of the young. Just as in the larger world we see the white hearse gliding silently by on its sad errand of bringing dust to dust, so in our smaller world we may, some day, be forced to watch the youthful spirit struggle out from the trappings of the flesh, and be forced to hang a white crepe on the door.

If the dread time comes to you, do not despair. Think that some fruits ripen earlier than others, and fall to the ground, not because they are discarded and worthless, but because they are matured in the light and sun, beneath the airs of a smiling sky, and are being gathered home early.

So with your little child. In a short space, the tot matured, was exempted from the toils of earth, and called to the perpetual playground of Heaven.

We loved our children for their beauty of countenance and form and their warm throbbing life. Because they were so lovable they were fit for Heaven, the land of love. The great Father looked over His beautiful garden of the world, and seeing the glowing rose, the perfect lily, the humble blue violet, and the modest wood-flowers; seeing all the glorious growth due to His careful gardening, He plucked some flowers here and there for Himself. Why, then! We should rejoice at the lot of these flowers! They were not for our sight. How could they be when they pleased the eyes of the all-pure God? Their

beauty is undying, their fragrance will be forever sweet, for they delighted God.

Now you can imagine the fairest of maidens, Our Blessed Mother, presenting one of these buds from her Father's garden, to the world's first gentleman, her Son. You can see Him smiling at the gift of the little flower culled from among the weeds of the world, for this blossom has been watered, and beautified in the red dews that fell one Friday from His grim Cross.

Very often, little children are the thank-gifts we pay Christ for His death; and very often, we solace Mary for the sword that pierced her heart, by placing our infant on her bosom.

Why, then, be sad? Weep awhile; envy the children, but leave them with Christ and Mary and the great Father.

The Church considers such children old. Take, for example, the life story and death of St. Stanislaus Kostka. The Church chooses for the prayers of the Mass reflections on old age and the death of the young, and she finally draws the conclusion that old age is not a matter of years nor of gray hairs, but that it consists in a spotless life.

"For venerable old age is not that of long time; nor is it measured by the number of years; but . . . a spotless life is old age."

Stanislaus died when he was only eighteen years old, a mere boy, just tasting life, just touching his lips to the brimming cup and feeling the warm blood of manhood in his veins. He was awakening to the possibilities of the future. And when he marched firmly out on the road of life, he met death in the highway waiting for him. The

monster wrapped him in its black mantle and carried him off from all youthful hopes and warm life. Yet the Church calls him an old man, not in so many words, it is true, but by an evident implication; for though St. Stanislaus did not enjoy long years of life, though he did not live to have gray hairs and the venerable aspect of the aged, he did have a spotless life when Death met him, and a spotless life is old age.

And here we may make a mistake in trying to find out what the Scripture means by a spotless life. Certainly the life of St. Stanislaus was not an easy, comfortable life, ignorant of trouble and cares. Though a boy he knew what it was to suffer. His brother Paul persecuted him while they were at school together; his father refused time and again to hear of his being a Jesuit; he was forced to live with heretics, bitter enemies of the Church and her holy practices. Perhaps his mother alone knew that the sensitive, tender boy was something beyond the common, for every time she looked into his eyes, she could recall the marvellous occurrences at his birth. The sufferings of his school life pained him, but the love of his mother and the fact that she understood him balanced the pain.

Once while at school he lay sick of a fever. He pleaded with his brother Paul to get him the priest for Confession and the last Sacraments. But Paul and the heretics, in whose house the two boys were lodging, refused his request and laughed at him. Then the devil appeared and tempted the holy youth, but in the midst of his trial God did not forsake him and sent His Angel to give Stanislaus Holy Communion. On another occa-

sion the Mother of God rewarded his devotion by placing in his arms the Infant Jesus and bade him enter the Society of Jesus. In obeying her, St. Stanislaus gives an example of promptness mixed with an endurance that is singular. For he set out for Rome on foot and walked 1,200 miles to the novitiate. Such a marvellous accomplishment proves the heart of the young man, and the indication it gives of obedience at all costs, is singularly proper in one who was entering the Order of Ignatius the soldier, an Order that exacts more than military obedience from the black-robed regiments massed in its lines.

St. Stanislaus lived only two years in the Society and when he died frequent miracles proved his wonderful sanctity. He is the patron of all Jesuit novitiates. He is one of the great patrons of Poland, his native land, and every Jesuit in all the world is proud to call the young boy Saint his brother.

This is his whole life. It may be summed up in a sentence; he was an innocent boy persecuted by his family and strangers, but God strengthened him and as he lived only for God, as he loved God alone above all things, so when he died he went to God's happiness in Heaven with a pure soul and a few short years of life to account for.

Knowing these details of his life it may not seem so strange that the Church reflects on old age and the death of the young in celebrating his feast day. For of what use is it to live long years if we live them in sin, detested by God, unloved by our fellow men and hated by ourselves? Such years are burdens, for no man can escape from himself, and every one who sins must ever have

those sins before his eyes all his life long, and sin is a miserable companion. Life with such a ghost haunting us is terrible.

We have seen the old die and we have said: "Well, he lived to a good old age; he lived the three score years and ten."

We have seen the young die and we have said: "What a pity! So young! Just in the bud of life and—dead!"

But have we ever looked at it in this way? "That old man lived a spotless life, and he was old not by reason of his years but by reason of his spotlessness. That young man lived only a few years, yet he lived to a grand old age, for a spotless life is old age."

There was a picture shown time time ago of a graveyard in France where American soldiers are buried. It was amazing to read that in one graveyard there were buried twenty-eight thousand of these young soldiers. We remember the men who made up our regiments, young, strong, cheerful, lithe, active fellows, eager for the danger, eager to do their duty for the land they loved. Think! Twenty-eight thousand of these young men are buried in one graveyard. The average cannot be more than twenty-two.

Why is it that we pity them? Why is it that we weep for them. They died young, they died swiftly, their life was cut short by the ping of a bullet, by an exploding shell, by the sudden savage thrust of a bayonet—and we pity them, we weep for them because there is in every human heart the desire to live, to live for many, many years, to a good old age, to live until the winter of snowy old years is on us, white and cold, but warm in the

reverence of our fellows. This is where we make our mistake, for the Church warns us, on the feast of St. Stanislaus and after his example, that years do not make up old age, nor do gray hairs, but a spotless life, and if those soldiers sleeping in the fields of France, buried in a foreign land far from all they held dear on earth; if those soldiers were spotless in God's sight when the bullet struck them, when the long steel bayonet pierced them, yes, even if they had wiped their souls clean at the very last moment, then they have lived to a grand old age, and their name is in honor and benediction forever.

In the last years the influenza has come among us with Death on its arm, and just as we have seen a man cut down grass or wheat with a scythe, so the pestilence went among us and Death was swinging the scythe. Now the young were cut down but it was noticed that the very young and the very old seemed to escape, yet youth in its beauty and strength and power was sought out by the sharp edge of the scythe in the skeleton hand and ruthlessly cut down.

There is the case of a young girl who was to be married on a certain day in January. She and her mother and her sisters had spent many happy hours together preparing the dresses, buying the things she would need for the little nest she was building for herself and the young man who loved her with all the affection of a manly heart. He had just returned from France with a medal for courage shining on his breast, and before this young couple there seemed to stretch ahead the road to a great happiness even unto a good old age. A week before the day set aside for the

marriage, the girl took sick with the influenza and on the day she was to be married—she died.

There is the case of a young man who had finished his law studies and was making a name for himself. He was a brilliant man, gifted with every talent. He was a powerful man hardly ever sick in his life. When he married he was already a well known lawyer and a wonderful career was predicted for him. A son was born to him and when the boy was one month old, the father came home one day with a cold. His wife urged him to go to bed, but he refused. The next day he had a fever. The doctor was called, examined him and shook his head. Influenza and pneumonia, both well advanced. In a week the young lawyer was dead and his wife left alone with the child, was sick not with the influenza nor with anything the doctors could cure, but sick with the crushing sickness of the heart. She left the house, she could not bear to go into those rooms where her husband had been when Death gripped him by the shoulder and led him away from his new home, away from his happiness, away from his young wife, away from his young son.

Some years ago a band of seminarians went on a picnic to a place along a nearby river. It was a hot day in August and the picnic promised to be a most happy one, a day in the open, a day far from the books, a day glorious in the expansiveness of the great outdoors and in the jolly companionship of good companions. One of the students, a hearty, cheerful, holy and talented man, very popular with all his comrades, went in swimming with the rest, and in less than two minutes, a friend who was swimming along near

him, heard a gasp, a faint choking cry and—that was all. He went down. Now there were expert swimmers in the gathering, they rushed to the spot and dived for the body. The suspense was terrible, for moment after moment passed and though they knew the exact spot at which he had gone down, yet in the Providence of God, they were unable with all their toil and superhuman efforts to recover the body. They labored for five awful hours and when at last they drew the body in from the fatal waters, it was a sad sight to see the lifeless shell of what had been so short a time ago their friend; it was a sad sight to see how the strong arms dangled listlessly when they moved his body; sad to see how the noble head wagged powerlessly when the mourning friends carried him to the shore.

His mother was seventy-five years old and a certain seminarian saw her when she was just about to step into the college parlor to look on the body of her son for the first time. She came to the threshold and looked fearfully in. She saw in the dim light the students grouped around, praying; she saw the black hangings on the windows; she saw the lighted candles, and at last—at last—she saw the black coffin, and fell on her knees and cried out mournfully: "O Mother of Sorrows, give me the strength to bear it!"

Yet it seems strange to us that the Church in celebrating the feast of St. Stanislaus should reflect on old age and the death of the young. We need such reflections! Ask your own heart. There is a mother who has mourned for a young boy for years and years. Oh, what a fine strong man he would be today! There is a father who

has wept silently over the little girl who went away from him many years ago and will not come back again. How bright his home would be, if she were there! Think of those whom you knew. They died young and you pitied them just as you pity St. Stanislaus when you hear that he died at the early age of eighteen. We are foolish to pity them, for in the very first prayer of the Mass in honor of Stanislaus, it says, speaking of the Saint and of all young men who have died in God's holy grace: "Because he was pleasing in God's sight, therefore, God snatched him away from the midst of wickedness. A spotless life is old age."

And who can say that God does not know best? Old age might have meant eternal damnation in hell-fire, if your boy or girl had lived. Who can say that the graveyard in France where 28,000 young soldiers are sleeping is not the resting-place of many Saints!

The merit of the supreme sacrifice made by the young troops is increased when we think that they died in a foreign land. God considered such a death a serious sorrow, for He threatened the King of Juda with it as a grave penalty. "Weep not for him that is dead, nor bemoan him with your tears; lament him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country."² And again, later on, we find this threat: "And I will send thee and thy mother that bore thee, into a strange country, in which you were not born; and there you shall die."³

Surely it is comforting to look forward to a day when, if we must die, our eyes will be closed not by the hands of strangers, but by the hands that have worked deeds of love for us. Dying itself

²Jer. xxii, 10. ³Ibid., 26.

is a lonesome business in any case, but to die among strangers is appalling.

Who can say that the young girl who died on her marriage-day is not better off than if she had lived to be a hundred? Who will dare to say that the young lawyer was not better off when he died in his youth after receiving all the Sacraments? The mother of the seminarian who was drowned put the case clearly when she said, in the midst of her bitter tears: "If he had lived he might have sinned."

Still, after all our reflections, is it not strange to think that more young people die before reaching mature life than those who are granted the blessing of years and gray hairs? It would seem that the human race puts forth its buds and is never allowed to see them in their beauty. It is like the gardener who cultivates his flowers only to find in the end that more have drooped and died in immaturity than those which have matured and reached their full time of life.

This is seen also in the Gospels, for those whom Our Lord raised from the dead, we find all to have been young. Lazarus was about thirty; the son of the widow of Naim was young; the daughter of the ruler was young.

How many of one family ever reach the age of seventy? How many of your own family have you buried before the hoar-frost touched their hairs and the mellow wisdom of age brightened on their lips and in their eyes?

It is the same with the apple-trees and the cherry-trees. In spring what a magnificent mass of sweet-scented blossoms, enriching the air with their fragrance. Then a few rain storms and

many of the tender flowers are lying on the ground, in the mud. A few wind storms and a heap of fragile beauty lies clustered about the dark melancholy roots of the mother tree as if she grieved for her children, gone so soon. And if the flowers escape the rains and the winds, how very often it happens that the frost bites their beauty and nips their hold on the parent branch whence they draw their nourishment and strength, and sends them fluttering down to the frozen earth.

Now what is the reason for this? Surely, God who lets not the sparrow fall unheeded to the earth, must have His own good design in permitting death to mow down the young of our race and leave them in countless rows for the resurrection.

There are many reasons which can be assigned. The Scriptures tell us, for instance, of the death of David's child, because the King had sinned. The story is well worth repeating. It contains many good lessons for us when we shall be in grief for the loss of our children. "And David said to Nathan: I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David: The Lord also hath taken away thy sin. Thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing, the child that is born to thee, shall surely die. And Nathan returned to his house. The Lord also struck the child which the wife of Urias had borne to David, and his life was despaired of. And David besought the Lord for the child; and David kept a fast, and going in by himself lay upon the ground. . . . And it came to pass

on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead. For they said: Behold when the child was yet alive, we spoke to him and he would not hearken to our voice. How much more will he afflict himself if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw his servants whispering, he understood that the child was dead. And he said to his servants: Is the child dead? They answered him: He is dead."

Now we read that David arose and anointed himself and ate meat, and his servants were surprised, for when the child was sick, David had wept and prayed and fasted, and now that the child was dead, the King rose and ate. David answered the servants, and his answer should be written heavily on all sorrowing hearts. "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept for him; for I said: Who knoweth whether the Lord may not give him to me, and the child may live. But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Shall I be able to bring him back any more? I shall go to him rather; but he shall not return to me."⁴

And this is done according to the just judgment of God. He said: "For I am the Lord thy God, a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generation to them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto many thousands to them that love Me, and keep My commandments."⁵

Hence, one reason for the death of the young is the punishment of the parents. "Oh," you say, "I would rather die myself than see my child die!" David would have died to save the innocent son, the result of his sin. But it is a greater punish-

⁴II Kings xii, 13-21. ⁵Deut. v, 9, 10.

ment to take your child away from you than to take away your life, is it not? Hence the avenging hand of God is heavy on you if you sin against Him. The children are well taken care of, and David's child has been enjoying happiness these thousands of years. God punishes the parents, not the children, when he takes the child to Himself and leaves emptiness in hearts that have turned away from Him.

Another reason for the death of the young is the sins of the young themselves.

Absalom, David's handsome son, rebelled against his father, gave great scandal to the nation, and was punished by death when God made his beauty the means of his hanging. How David wept for his boy, Absalom! But David knew that God was just in taking him away, for the boy had sinned and been the source of sin in others. He had caused the murder of his brother Amnon and caused his father to flee. He was given over to pleasure and vengeance and ambition and we read: "But in all Israel there was not a man so comely, and so exceeding beautiful as Absalom; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him," yet all this beauty and forgiveness of his father, came to a sad ending, for while Absalom hung by his hair from the bough of the oak tree, Joab, the King's general, thrust three lances through his heart "and whilst he yet panted for life, sticking on the oak, ten young men, armor-bearers of Joab, ran up and, striking him, slew him. . . . and they took Absalom and cast him into a great pit in the forest, and they laid an exceeding great heap of stones upon him."

Now the King loved his son, and when report of the battle was brought to him, his question was this: "Is the young man Absalom safe? And Chusai answering him said: Let the enemies of my lord, the King, and all that rise against him unto evil, be as the young man is. The King therefore being much moved, went up to the high-chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went he spoke in this manner: My son Absalom, Absalom, my son! Would to God that I might die for thee, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!"⁶

Apply this affecting account of David and his son to the many life-stories that are being written in our modern days by young men who run into evil against the advice and fond love of their parents and friends. God punishes them by early deaths, and though, like David, we weep and moan for their loss, still God in His heaven knows whether they had their chance and threw it away.

These two reasons for the death of the young are terrible to contemplate. But what of the good parents and the good sons? They die, too. Neither sin to any great extent, and yet they are swept up into the dust-heap of the dead with those who have sinned and incurred the wrath of God.

The answer is joyous and consoling. If the reasons given above make us shrink, and, let us hope, avoid sin, the reason to be given now should make us rejoice, for now God is not angry in His Judgeship but loving in His Fatherhood. It is the same answer that we make to the question: Why did a holy youth like St. Stanislaus die at the

⁶II Kings xviii.

early age of eighteen years? This is the answer given by Scripture:

"He pleased God and was beloved, and living among sinners he was translated. He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. For the bewitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind. Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time; for his soul pleased God; therefore He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities. But the people see this and understand not, nor lay up such things in their hearts; that the grace of God and His mercy is with His saints, and that He has respect to His chosen."⁷

We must admit that the traps of Satan are always yawning for the young. Their feet walk swiftly into snares, and the beauty of life fascinates them. This is the bait the devil uses to catch them and once this "witchery and nonsense" has seized hold on their souls, it is most difficult to remove it. God takes them to Himself and saves their unwary feet from slipping, their thoughtless steps from stumbling. Surely, for the young, the cup of death has many nauseating dregs in it, and for us who must stand helplessly by and see them slip out of the envelope of the flesh, for us it is bitter, too. But we cannot think for a moment that death, such as was St. Stanislaus', is in reality a bitter thing. We all must slip through the tunnel, dark, with walls dripping, clammy, damp and lonesome, and we must all go our narrow way to God, alone. But His Angels who brought Stanislaus Communion

⁷Wis. iv, 10-15.

must have walked with him through the tunnel, and His Angels must carry the sweet small bodies of dead infants through the dreadful place of loneliness into the warm home of Heaven and there, surely, the Angels must place these babes in the arms of the Mother of Christ. For us the bitterness remains; for the dead, the bitterness soon passes, and they are joyous in the thought that many years do not make a good life, that life consists in its goal achieved. As soon as we obtain Heaven we are young forever no matter how old we were when we died.

Augustine reflects as follows:

"You see how the hair grows gray and white as old age approaches. Sometimes you vainly seek a dark hair on the head of a man whose growing old is perfectly healthy and natural. And so when our life is such that the blackness of sin may be looked for in it and not found, this green old age is like a second youth, and will always be vigorous."⁸

St. Augustine mourned for his son Adeodatus, as we should mourn for the young whom God has called to Himself. Listen to the words of this great Saint. He tells how he and Alipius went down to Milan with the boy, all three to be baptized. The boy was then fifteen and surpassed in learning many scholars of ripe years. "I was perfectly astonished," says Augustine, "at that prodigy of wit." And then he adds: "Thou didst soon take away his life from the earth, and with more security I now remember him, having no fear, either for his childhood, or for his youth, or indeed at all for the man."⁹ Here is resignation, and a just concept of what is best.

⁸*On Ps.* xci. ⁹*Confessions*, IX, vi.

In another place the Saint finds fault with those parents who weep and mourn grievously for the death of their sons and do not weep when they see their children sinning. This is not Christian, for the boy is more surely and utterly dead when he sins than when God takes him away from sin.

St. John Chrysostom has many beautiful reflections on death. "If a just man dies," he exclaims, "rejoice! He is safe; he is free from future fears." Again he says: "If you loved the dead, rejoice too, because he has finished his voyage over the billows of this present life. But if your son has departed from this tottering and mortal kingdom to rule and command otherwheres, do not desire him to come thence that you might see him. When he has gone to a greater and better land, can you not bear his absence for a little while? You have given back what was given you; you have returned your trust. Do not be troubled when you see your treasure safely secured in a treasure-house unbreakable."¹⁰

¹⁰*Homily xxxii, on Matt.*

CHAPTER IX

PEACE SOUGHT AND FOUND

NATIONS may sigh loudly for that permanent peace and world tranquillity which will result in disarming the soldier and converting the munition factory into a bakery. But the sword will never be made into a ploughshare, nor the bayonet into a horseshoe until morality has secured undisputed empire in the wild hearts of men. We may hope to do away with the soldier; we may say: "His helmet now shall make a hive for bees,"¹ or,

Take away the sword;
States can be saved without it;²

and forget the fact that man is ruled by his soul, that no amount of external legislation will ever force a man to be moral. If you take away the soldier's bayonet, he might fall a-fighting with his fists, and the sooner we train our souls in the peace that passeth understanding, the more quickly will we be able to govern our fists and swords. This first training in the ways of peace should be had at home. If the home-world is a battlefield, why should we talk of inter-national peace? Quite bluntly does St. Thomas of Villanova remark: "If the wife, husband, children and serv-

¹Peele. ²Lytton, *Richelieu*.

ants are in concord, what is home but Heaven; yet if discord is among them, what is home but Hell?" Truly, home with an atmosphere of peace for the deeds of love is Paradise, and hopeless is that home which knows not such repose.

Where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all.³

Now the peace of God surpasses all peace and the peace of the people in the Church is the glory of her ministers, said St. Augustine; and the principle foundation of domestic peace, in the mind of St. Chrysostom, indeed, of all good things for the home, is in this that the wife should be in accord with her husband, for where this concord exists, nothing sorrowful can happen. "With three things my spirit is pleased, which are approved before God and men; the concord of brethren, and the love of neighbors, and man and wife that agree well together."⁴

Peace is nothing more than that tranquillity which results from the common and secure possession of a good thing. Thus, when a man is at peace with God, his will is in accord with the divine will, as if God and man possessed the same good thing. "This is true peace, not to be divided from the will of God, and to take joy in those things which can belong only to God. For when sensuality in no way resists the will, and the will in no way contradicts the reason, then there is serenity of mind and the kingdom of God."⁵

This accord and order must show itself in the man's actions, for never can a man be said to

³Milton, *Paradise Lost*, i. ⁴*Ecclus.* xxv, 1. ⁵St. Leo, *Republic*.

God's law

possess peace whose actions are against God's law. "Peace is tranquil liberty," said Plato, and in the Christian sense this saying means that the man who has peace will act in accord with God's law, never for the moment losing tranquillity of mind in the fear of disorder. True liberty is subjection to God's will, and when we use this liberty we have serenity of mind and true peace.

"Much peace have they that love Thy law, and to them there is no stumbling block."⁶

The happy boy will whistle to himself, regardless of the passers-by who smile at the shrill expression of his peaceful soul. In the same way, the man who is enjoying the true liberty of peace, will express his joy in actions that speak loudly of God to all the world. So the Angels sang on the first Christmas morning: "And on earth, peace to men of good will"; and the will of man is good when it joins itself to the will of God.

If there is to be peace in your home-world, there must be this submission to God's will, whether in joy or sorrow, in riches or poverty, in sickness or health. Never is our tranquil possession of God seriously menaced until we lose sight of His law by too much inspection of ourselves. The closer you put your face to the mirror, the less clear will your features be, simply because nothing is distinct in a false perspective. In the same way, when a man looks into his own soul for peace and finds only himself, he cannot see God and will never enjoy what he is seeking. In the home-world, when self looms larger than the Divine Will, self becomes all in all, and grows monstrous feeding on itself. Peace cannot be where selfishness is the pig in the sty, and there was never yet an

⁶Ps. cxviii, 165.

honest, sincere man, who after carefully exploring the regions of his soul, averred himself satisfied, content and peaceful as he was. "Who resists Him and has peace?"⁷ "There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord."⁸

On the other hand, when man, gazing down the perspective of daily life and humbly acknowledging that he is not all in all, that God is in His Heaven above, granting peace only through union of wills, then he comes to realize the beauty of life, its tranquillity, ease of soul, contentment, and the serene possession of the greatest good, God. "Transient peace is a trace of eternal peace," said St. Gregory, and surely our peace then will consist in the certainty that at last we can never sin against God, and are in no danger of ever losing His pleasure. This is our meaning when we pray that the dead may rest in peace; that is, we wish that they may rest secure in God's grace forever.

St. Augustine describes peace as "serenity of mind, tranquillity of soul, simplicity of heart, the bond of love, the strength of charity. This it is which does away with dissensions, settles wars, represses rage, tramples the proud under foot, loves the lowly, brings agreement in discord, harmony to enemies. It is sweet to all, and knows neither loftiness nor empty prating. The man who has it, let him hold on to it. Let the man who has mislaid it, hunt for it again, and let him who has lost it search eagerly for it."⁹

And this is the gift Christ left us. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid."¹⁰

⁷Job ix, 4. ⁸Is. xlviii, 22. ⁹The City of God. ¹⁰John xiv, 27.

It is the wish ever on the lips of Paul in addressing his different congregations. "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but justice and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."¹¹ "The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."¹² "In His days shall justice spring up," says the Psalm, "and abundance of peace."¹³

St. Augustine pictures the man who has not peace, and denies him the name of Christian. "He who has not peace of heart, lips and deed, cannot be called a Christian. He who does not hope for peace, places his life and foot on slippery paths; he sails his ship in a storm; walks on a precipice and sows his crops on sand."¹⁴

There is another union of wills which is most common when home is mentioned. Unless our homes are in desert places, we have neighbors; and domestic peace very often means right relations with the family next door. When Johnny throws his baseball and breaks a window, he upsets two worlds and demoralizes the concord existing between good neighbors. No policeman can settle such a dispute. This is intimate matter touching the welfare of families, and there have been many instances of lifelong harshness between neighbors, that could have been settled by a little judicious humor rightly applied. The baseball in the hands of an active and careless boy breaks hearts as well as glass, and to establish peace again is to bring neighbors into accord and union.

St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians exhorts them to this union: "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no

¹¹Rom. xiv, 17. ¹²Philipp. iv, 7. ¹³Ps. lxxi. ¹⁴Sermon ii.

schisms among you, that you be perfect in the same mind and the same judgment."¹⁵ And did not Our Lord Himself urge this neighborly peace in His instructions to the Apostles setting out upon their journey? "Into whatsoever house you enter, first say: "Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you."¹⁶

We must be united by uninterrupted charity to resist the attacks of demons on the tranquillity of our souls. Petty quarrels are out of place and make us play into the hands of our enemy. He has lost his possession of the great Good for all eternity, and, conscious of this, writhing under the curse of selfish pride, his only delight is to wage unending and bitter war against our souls. There will never be a disarmament parley in Hell. Lucifer will forever send his cohorts to besiege and bomb the souls of men. Only in our great Ally, God, is our security, only in Him is our peace. How absurd is man to pay his peace of soul for sin. He has squandered his hope of solace and beggared himself for a momentary trifle. What is sin, after all, but a hoax. The man has been sold a gold brick; his good money is in the devil's pocket and he has nothing for himself but a soiled soul and a lifelong regret. A half-hour's ecstasy demands the price of eternal remorse. These men are unable to look you in the eye, they have been such fools, and their case is always the same since Solomon bartered his wisdom for the smiles of dancing women. Men like this slink cowering on the backstairs of the world, thrust forth from their own good repute and the worthy councils of strong men.

¹⁵1 Cor. i, 10. ¹⁶Luke x, 5.

Neighborly discord embitters the home circle. Those people next door become evil genii, and to pass them on the street, with head high, and eyes staring blankly, is simply to gratify your selfishness. The best way to pay off your grudge would be to salute your enemy politely, remark on the fine weather, and: "How well you look this morning! The air is bracing, these days, isn't it? By the way, Johnny is all upset about breaking your window. I'm so sorry!"

Who could resist you if this method of procedure were followed! "Make peace with your enemy," urges Augustine. "You know not when life will end, and when it is ended there remains the Judge, the grim Guard, and the Prison. But if you have kept peace and agreement with your enemy, instead of a Judge you will find a Father; instead of a grim Guard, an Angel lifting you up onto the bosom of Abraham; instead of a Prison, you will find Paradise."¹⁷

In another place Augustine remarks that he would much prefer not to have an enemy than to conquer him, and the poet Wordsworth sums it all up beautifully in these two lines:

But hushed be every thought that springs
From out the bitterness of things.

Shakespeare looks rather more philosophically on the matter.

What's gone and what's past help
Should be past grief.¹⁸

Peace with God and with the neighbor means increase of tranquillity for ourselves. This is one

¹⁷*The Word of God.* ¹⁸*Winter's Tale.*

of the immediate benefits produced by concord between wills. "Blessed are the peacemakers," says Our Lord, for they shall be called the children of God."¹⁹ And St. Peter says: "He that will love life and see good days . . . let him decline from evil and do good; let him seek after peace and pursue it."²⁰ "Have peace," said St. Paul, "and the God of peace and love shall be with you."²¹

The proverb has it that besides being something worth acquiring for its own sake, peace is a perpetual joy. "A secure mind is like a continual feast."²²

There can be no doubt, then, that peace is something desirable. Hence we naturally inquire into the means of obtaining it. What must we pay for peace? How much of self must we spend to buy union with God's will? For the further removed we get from self, the more peaceful we become. The first means is, certainly, to obey the law of God. Isaias, speaking for the Lord, says: "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; thy peace had been as a river."²³ This is the direct, level, well-paved road to peace, the observation of God's commandments. Make no compromise. You do not win peace by silencing your conscience. You win it by resisting evil in every form, and the standard book to read on this subject of resistance is the book God wrote for Moses, the tablet of the ten commandments. This means suffering since no one can observe the commandments and utterly please himself. "Do this!" "Don't do that!" Such expressions arouse the contradictory part of our nature, and we often enough feel like saying: "I won't do it!" "I will

¹⁹Matt. v. ix. ²⁰I Pet. iii. 10. ²¹I Cor. xiii. 11. ²²Prov. xv. 15.

²³Is. xlviii. 18.

do it!" And while we fancy that we are harming the one who commands, we are really harming no one but ourselves. The sudden consciousness of this idea robs us of peace, for we do sometimes realize that by not observing the law of God, we make fools of ourselves.

Ruskin remarks on this suffering as the root of peace: "For many a year to come the sword of every righteous nation must be whetted to save or subdue; nor will it be by patience of others' suffering, but by the offering of your own, that you will ever draw nearer to the time when the great change shall pass upon the iron of the earth: when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; neither shall they learn war any more."²⁴

Peace and justice are friends and go hand in hand. When a man is just, he is observing the ten commandments; and when he is just, he is at peace. The one trouble with us is that while we all want peace, we do not all desire to take the means to get it. St. Paul's wish to his people was ever this: "Grace and Peace to you," for they go hand in hand.

A second means of obtaining this jewel of price is to cut deep into the roots of our selfishness. How much we value the pronoun "*I*." How wise was Seneca when he remarked that if the words "*thine* and *mine*" were removed from language, we would lead most tranquil lives. The reason underlying the saying is the natural selfishness of men, so that when *YOU* have what *I* want, there is discord, jealousy, envy, avarice, lying, anger and hate. Could these foul accretions on the soul be cleansed away, we would have peace; or, in

²⁴The Two Paths.

other words, self is lying like a snarling beast in the dark caverns of discord. Do away with the beast and you will know peace.

The love of God is a sure means of peace. Not only is our will in union with His, but we are alone in a solitude of heart, soul and action with the Almighty. This love the saints experienced. They built themselves solitudes by expelling all things that would not be in keeping with the presence of God, and entertaining God is most certainly the creature's highest expression of confident love.

And have we not the real union with God every time we receive Him in Holy Communion? This is peace, for at that moment, and during the precious moments that follow, we possess all Good. He unites Himself to us, and we cling closely to Him, knowing at once our own unworthiness, but relying on His wish to give us peace of soul by giving us Himself. Then we are of one heart and one mind and one soul.

St. Bernard names four powerful impediments to peace, namely: a sin that keeps gnawing at us; bitter anxieties; overweening affections, and troubles that keep us stretched on the cross. But perhaps all can be reduced to inordinate desires, as is pointed out by St. James: "From whence are wars and contentions among you? Are they not hence, from your concupiscences, which war in your members."²⁵

The helps to peace which Kempis mentions are proofs that unselfishness and humility are the greatest sources of this virtue. "Son, now will I teach thee the way of peace and true liberty.

²⁵Jas. iv, 1.

Study, my son, to do rather the will of another than thy own. Ever choose rather to have less than more. Always seek the lowest place, and to be subject to every one. Desire always and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee. Behold such a one entereth into the borders of peace and rest."²⁶

This is the peace that should be founded in our homes. (The first cradle of peace is the old home, and the gleam of peace illuminates that beloved world more brilliantly than any other. In the gentle influence of mother and father, sisters and brothers, there flows into the soul a stream of contentment, tranquillity and repose that is strangely and sorrowfully absent once the border of the front door has been crossed and the tumult of the outside world admitted into our lives. Peace is the cement holding together the stones of the state, and though many men make a social community, still each individual would be a separate community apart from the others if peace, the union and bond of society, did not rule all. Let each man rule himself in utter disregard of his fellow men, and there will never be peace, for there will never be union of wills. How severe is the havoc wrought in the sick body by the discord of one of its members. A sick stomach has upset nations, for the actions of a man are shadows of his healthy or unhealthy body, and Kings, Statesmen, and Generals have been known to be sick at critical periods of the world's history. Certain attacks would never have been ordered if the General had been feeling well, and many a King has lost his throne because a sick stomach gave him a headache and the headache

²⁶Imitation of Christ III, xxiii.

caused him to answer a wiser man in a petulant manner.

"Ne'er to meet and ne'er to part, is peace," said the poet Young, and the home alone gives that place of permanent abode where there are few partings and few strange meetings. (Home is the training school wherein we learn the lessons of peace, the story of abiding contentment.) Of home we can pray as the Church prays:

"Visit, O Lord, we beseech Thee, this dwelling, and drive far from it all the snares of the enemy; may Thy holy Angels dwell in it, to guard us in peace, and may Thy blessing be upon us always, through Our Lord, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, world without end. Amen."

CHAPTER X

THE HOME FEAST OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

THERE are times in the year, just as there are times in our lives, when fear of Our Lord is more dominant than our love for Him. Lent, for instance, is a time for sorrow and fear. The Church robes herself in black and mourns for the dead Christ. His white, stark body looms on the cross against its sullen, wild background of angry sky. Pain, torture, cruel anguish are written in blood across His brow and in His red, gaping wounds. His mother is bowed to the ground at His feet and the darkness in her heart is more impenetrable than the darkness of the skies.

There is fear of Him in all hearts. Death is very seldom lovely, and His death, above all, was horrible. In our souls there are, of course, love and pity and contrition, but does not fear predominate? He is dead; we helped to kill Him; what will happen to us? That, perhaps, is the way our selfish minds reason.

Easter is a time of joy just as is Christmas. Easter is the greatest feast of the year, for if Christ be not risen from the dead then is our faith vain. When He broke the seal of the tomb, He stamped the seal of His Divine authority on our religion. Hence joy is unbounded.

But you will remark that this joy has an aspect

of relief about it. The sudden change from sorrow to joy is startling. He was dead. We mourned bitterly, for we were as responsible as the Jews. Things looked black as death for us. But now He is risen and, rising, has guaranteed to us our own resurrection. So the joy is a relief in contrast to great sorrow and dread.

Now there is a feast in the year that gives us the purest kind of joy. There is not the least sign of fear. Grown-up emotions are absent. Indeed, this feast is not for grown-ups primarily, and they can enjoy it in reflected light only. But for all that, their joy is very pure and fearless, since this feast is the great one of the home-world.

What can be more innocent than a new-born babe? What can be more pure and innocent than a young girl who is at the same time a mother and a virgin? You have seen beauty in art and nature. You have seen the most beautiful of God's handiwork in man's noble form, but art, standing before this Maiden Mother and her Baby, is stuttering of tongue, lame of hand and altogether flat and unprofitable in the results of its labors. There are some things an artist cannot express satisfactorily. One of them is the soft, rounded, ruddy beauty of a new-born child's face and limbs; another is the young mother's smile when she looks into her child's eyes and sees herself staring at herself, as if she had but just now come back from a long voyage into the clouds that surrounded heaven.

So for real Christmas emotions we must leave the grown-ups, men especially, and turn to the children, associating them, naturally, with their mothers. Men are in the way, be they artists,

soldiers, bankers or laborers; but if the man is a father, he may stand in the doorway and gaze on with becoming reverence.

In every birthday there is joy, but there is also a tear, for the past can never be again, and many a mother has wept silently in the seclusion of her darkened room, over the birthdays of her children. She was happy! But the baby does not exist any more. It is the strong, strong man whose step comes heavily up the stairs to her room. That son was her baby and the son may not have been all that his mother wished and prayed for, when she rocked him in her arms.

Hence, in our birthdays there is usually a tear with the joy, a tear for the days that can never come again; for the past that could have been better, and joy for the goodness of God in giving children, in granting life up to this year, in thanksgiving for the benefits of a home. For not all a mother's dreams come true and not all a child's sins are heartless.

But in this birthday of Christ there is not a tear. There is only joy. And the situation is this. A poor young girl, perhaps seventeen years of age, the most beautiful of Eve's daughters gives birth to her first-born Son. She has been cast off from human habitation because there was no room for her at the inn, and has been forced to seek shelter with the brute beasts in their cavern on the hillside. Here is the box from which the cow and the ass have been wont to eat their grain. Is there no better bed for her Son? Perhaps some old discarded cradle may be found in the corner; but no, there is nothing save the manger, and it is here that the young girl lays her small Son, and

it is from a manger that the God-Man gazes for the first time into the adoring eyes of His beautiful Mother, and she saw in His eyes the beauty of the Heaven that could not contain Him.

Outside the stable and up where the sky is so bright, with more than the cold wintry splendor of the stars, a music sounds sweeter far than men have ever heard. The Angels sing thus only when Christ is born. To Him, of course, there is nothing new or strange about the song. And to Mary's ears there is a perfect fitness, an appropriateness, that does not allow the singing to attract her attention from the Boy's face. But to Joseph, gazing reverently, this song is an amazing thing, these trumpets and choruses from the skies are amazing things; and so for the shepherds back in the snow-covered hills, this burst of angelic song is an amazing thing, and they gaze with startled eyes at one another. When the voice rings out—"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will"—they fall down on their faces and adore.

The poor shepherds watching their flocks on the hills, see the Angels and hear the music of their trumpets and their songs. Poor shepherds on the hills, and Herod the magnificent in his palace! Poor shepherds on the hills, shivering in the cold of the winter nights, and great Caesar Augustus in his palace in Rome, master of the world! Why, Herod and Caesar can command music from the finest singers in the world! But Angels do not sing for them. Angels sing for poor shepherds; Angels sing when a poor girl lays her Son in straw, in the feed-box of dumb animals, in the borrowed comfort of an animal

shelter on a cold hillside, in Caesar's world domain and Herod's little kingdom. Surely a strange bed for the King of Heaven and Earth to lie upon!

Watch the procession over the hills as the shepherds drive on their flocks in the direction of the poor stable. Every shepherd knew that old, ramshackle shed or cave, just as he would know every other nearby shelter in time of storm. Often that old man and that strong young fellow had folded their ewes and lambs in the very place until the biting blasts should die away and the rioting snow should cease. So they drive their flocks ahead of them and the young shepherds carry the lambkins on their broad shoulders and the older men tarry behind with the mother ewes. There are some boys with the shepherds and to them the dogs are the most interesting animals of all. These are the wise old dogs who run here and there with great noise of barking and wild swishing of tails as they gallop now on this side, now on that, keeping the sheep all orderly in the line of march. Now the procession passes over this hill and around those rocks, and into the valley where the frozen stream threads the bottom lands. Once across the valley and up the side of the opposite hill, they will have reached their goal. They will see the God-Man!

And who were they to be so privileged? Certainly they made a strange group to be hastening to their King. Surely, it was a strange gathering to receive the invitation direct from Heaven and in the pleasing form of angelic music, to be present at the cave of Bethlehem on that morning! And if you searched up and down the land for

poorer, humbler, more simple-minded men, you could not have found them. They wore their hearts on the sleeves of their coats and God, seeing the purity and simplicity of those hearts, gladly sent His Angels to invite them of all men to the birthday reception of His only Son.

Now you will remember that these shepherds feared the Angels. But where is it recorded that when they reached the cave and saw the young girl leaning over her Babe, where is it recorded that they feared?

They said not a word but offered their lambs, perhaps, or, speaking in whispers to Joseph, blessed him and asked his blessing in return. But whether they spoke or not, they surely never raised their eyes from the young girl by the manger; they never looked away from the Mother's or the Son's face.

And fear! It was not in their hearts. They did not know what it was in that Presence. Who could fear a Baby and His Mother or the gentle Saint who looked on and adored? Only love was in their hearts, only joy, only thanksgiving, only a great, marvellous, all-pervading peace; for God had come among His people and here one could see the very Son of God, His maiden Mother, and the strong guardian of them both; here one could see the home Christ lived in, and all the time the music of the Angels sounded in the heavens. But the music was gradually forgotten, as the shepherds looked on the faces of the Mother and her Child.

Now that is Christmas. When you think of that scene in the cave, do you grow fearful, and sad, and is your joy in any way tinged with relief or

dread? Purity and peace, simplicity and holiness are there, and no fear. The Herods and the Caesars among us will never know that there is a glorious birthday, but the simple shepherds among us will know, and will not exchange that knowledge and the sight of the Mother and Child for all the Empire of Augustus, for all the Kingdom of Herod.

Christmas, after all, is a family feast, and who so poor among us as not to claim a home and love and the affection of friend and the respect of our fellow men? The home is the great central pivot on which the world turns. Take it away and the world must crash down of its own weight like a small boy's top that has lost its spinning power. The world is a chaotic habitation for brute beasts, if the home is ruined.

You have seen tremendous buildings, churches, office-buildings, monuments, that startle by their grace and beauty and massiveness. But what you cannot see in these expressions of man's genius is the foundation. That is hidden deep in the earth away from the eye, and the higher the building, the deeper the foundation. "If," says St. Augustine, "you contemplate raising a high and noble edifice, be first intent upon the basis of humility. When a man wishes and prepares to raise a solid structure, the greater the building is to be, the deeper he goes for the foundation. When the structure is finished, it is raised aloft in the air, but he who digs the foundation goes deep into the heart of the earth. Thus, before reaching its height, the building has a lowly beginning, from which it is raised high into the air."¹ It is the same way with the home. The greatness of any

¹Sermon lix.

country is nothing but a mocking Tower of Babel, sure to collapse, unless the home be the foundation. If our nation builds its glory on money, it will fall, just as surely as the power that was Rome fell before the onrush of barbarians. If the nation builds its glory on a man's reason irrespective of God, the nation will fall just as cultured Greece fell before the materialism of Rome. If the nation builds its glory on a freedom that is license, on a freedom that unbinds the marriage tie; on a freedom that teaches men to disregard the rights of their fellow men in the wild rush for higher wages, that allows men to choke the last cent from the poor, then the nation is not building glory but ruin, and as surely as Rome and Greece fell into the dust and are dust today, just so surely will this nation fall and her name be used to point a moral.

The true foundation of a great nation is the home, and the cave of Bethlehem is the rock on which the home is built, for purity was there, and obedience was there, and the two weaknesses of our nation today are looseness in regard to marriage and the tossing aside of obedience to legitimate authority. Without obedience there can be no order, no law; without purity there can be no home, and in the home there must be both subjection to authority, which implies law, and purity, which implies love. With love and law the world will get along very well, and we may not be exactly just in blaming Herod and Caesar for not hearing the Angel's song. Some today are both blind and deaf, since they do not heed the greatest lesson taught by Bethlehem, the lesson of home.

Now many and many a long year has passed since the shepherds stood at the cave, and we must needs use our imagination to summon up the scene even in faint sketchy lines and colors. This is where art fails. But the emotions awakened in the shepherds, in Mary and in Joseph, are in our hearts today just as if the cave were in the next street and we could still hear the Angels singing. Many a Catholic home has been at some time or other the replica of the cave of Bethlehem, and for that reason it is that Christmas is a mothers' and children's feast. True, if the father and the men are good, they may be allowed to stand at the door with Joseph and the shepherds.

I once saw a mother place a young baby in her husband's arms. The man was a giant in size and his two hands made a large cradle for his child, and yet with all his strength and stature, there was never a more awkward sight in this world, as he stood there with arms outstretched looking at the child in his hands. The poor man knew not what to do, so he looked at his wife, at the child, at the opposite wall, and the tear in his eye was big with his heart's emotions. Then, of course, the baby cried and the big man's fright was pitiable. The mother quickly snatched the child away from the huge hands and soothed the rumpled feelings.

"You can work for Jimmie and me," she said smiling, "but really, Jim, you can't handle the baby. You look too absurd."

And that is just what Christmas teaches. The men can work for the Mother and the Babe, but the near approach, the place close to the Crib, is reserved for the mothers and children. The men

must look on and not appear too awkward. Still there is no fear in their hearts, for Joseph's was flooded with peace, and men after all do gather some peace in being near St. Joseph. Men are the guardians of purity and innocence, and who will say that in our times there is no need for such strong, great men, simple in life and heart, to shepherd the mothers and their little ones?

Christmas is the one time in the year when all old men are children and all old ladies good cooks. For Christmas, since it is a mothers' and children's feast, must of necessity be a home feast, and that means good things to eat, tempting odors from the kitchen around eleven o'clock, the smell of mince pie, the enticing odors of plum pudding, roast turkey, sweet potatoes, and so on until the nose reels under the overwhelming assaults.

And if you peep into the kitchen with the boys of the family, you will see the old grandmother sticking an inquiring fork into the pie; you will see the anxious mother, flushed and ruddy, stooping at the oven door, apron over her hands, waiting for just the right moment to investigate the browning of that turkey. You will see the girls cutting raisin bread, or preparing the dishes, all the time watchfully guarding the door against any sudden inroads by Johnny or Joe or Bill. And even father is watched suspiciously by his daughters, for though he does feel his responsibility in giving a good example to his sons, still he would like to get into the kitchen and cause a disturbance. Hence the suspicious glances of his knowing daughters. You may be sure of one thing. He is not minding the baby as his wife bade him, and if you will look into the parlor under the Christ-

mas tree, you will behold the seraphic infant as free as air and as irresponsible, investigating, with the help of a grinning grandfather, the inside of Bill's new drum.

This year the home means a lot to the soldiers who are the heroes of young and old. The thought of the war is not dimmed. They know what Christmas without a home means. They will sit around your dinner table, perhaps, and tell you what they ate in France. It makes no difference if they have told it all before. Veterans must be allowed a certain amount of talkativeness. One Sergeant said:

"Last Christmas, no, the Christmas before last, I had a cup of muddy water in the morning for breakfast and marched on that all day, with the pack growing heavier and the tin hat like a block of lead on my head. Both legs were soaked with the mud of sunny France. In the evening, just as it was getting dark, we halted and discovered that the kitchens were lost back on the road. The men did not speak nicely of those kitchens. But one man of our platoon found a pig trying to escape in the by-ways of the little village. The pig was soon ours. Then another fellow, on the hunt like all of us, discovered a rooster, very old and feeble, wandering about aimlessly, looking for death. The Lieutenant said it was blind or it never would have allowed itself to be caught. Anyway it got revenge. We served the old pig done up in the old rooster's feathers and had some potatoes for stuffing with a spoonful of rum thrown in. Each man got about an inch of pig and an eighth of an inch of rooster. Now our platoon was lucky. The rest of the men were not so fortunate in

finding pigs and roosters. But this meal, Mother! I wouldn't take all the roosters in France for one bite of this mince pie! We had to save the rooster from the other platoons at the point of the bayonet. But this pie is worth dying for."

Home and Christmas! The mother and her children! The father there as the guardian of them all, and not a bit of fear in any heart! Only peace and joy and love for the Infant God looking up into His Mother's face; only the sounds of Angel music and the bowed adoring heads of the shepherds and Joseph.

Surely, Christmas is the home-feast of the purest, most innocent joy.

CHAPTER XI

LOVE, THE MOTIVE POWER OF LIFE

THE home-world fosters one great guiding affection for all our lives. Home and love are synonyms, and if this is so, we ought clearly to consider what love is. The subject should not be so much in the background of our conversation and daily thoughts, since it is the one supreme concept of the Gospel, the new note in the music of life, sounded by the Son of God.

The man who has once tasted the love of home is like the man who has once tasted the love of God. He becomes an epicure, fed to satiety with delicacies and in him there is left no coarse appetite for baser foods. God fills our hearts to complete satisfaction and we can never afterwards be content with any one lower than Himself. So the home while we are on earth fills us with the most complete satisfaction, and outside of it we are never really content, and the man who has not experienced this satisfaction never understands what it is, though he may envy the happiness and sigh for what is not. Christ came to spread this fire of love upon the earth, and what is dearer to His Sacred Heart than that it should be enkindled in all the homes of the world? If love should exist anywhere it should exist in the home.

But if we do not know what love means, we

cannot be sure that we are on the great highway to Heaven. The reason is this. One day a Pharisee asked Our Lord what was the great commandment, and Our Lord answered:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind.—And the second is like to this. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Now if we do not know what love means, we cannot be sure that we are keeping the great commandment of love, we cannot be certain that our homes are fountains of love. Our salvation depends on keeping these two commandments, love of God and love of the neighbor, and these commandments rest on love.

At first sight, when you read anything, say a novel, with a love story in it, you are inclined to think that love is nothing more than a mere sentimental feeling towards some one; a mere emotion that is nice as long as it lasts. But these feelings, outside of novels, usually pass away like a breath of sultry wind. Nothing remains of them but the remembrance. The novels are wrong. Love is not a mere feeling. It is something greater, nobler, finer than that. Any home that fosters these feelings only is a frothy failure.

Perhaps you have seen the picture in which the artist tries to express the terrible reality of the Deluge. He has been very clever, for it is no easy thing to paint on a small picture what the Deluge meant to the people it destroyed. The roar and hiss and thunder of the rising waters cannot be painted on a piece of canvas. The cracking and crumbling of homes, the shrieks of women and children, the moans of strong men, the whim-

ering and howling of savage beasts, the uproarious destruction of mountains and forests and all the beauty of earth in her youth—these things cannot be painted on a piece of canvas. So the artist has chosen one scene, a very high mountain top with the waters rising around it, for nothing can stop them until they have covered the whole earth and drowned every living thing, man and beast, except Noe and those with him. And on the summit of the mountain, with frightened eyes turned toward the waters, stands a magnificent monarch of the jungles, a huge tiger, and in her mouth is the last of her brood, a small cub which she has been able to save up to this moment by bringing it to the last place the waters can reach. And beside the tiger's cub is an infant held high in its mother's protecting arms while she is upheld in the strong arms of her husband. But the waters have already reached him and will soon sweep him away. Oh, if he could only keep them from his wife! Oh, if she could only keep them from her child!

We know that this is real love. There is the animal affection which urges the savage beast to save her cubs; there is the sturdy love of the husband for his wife; there is the pathetic, wonderful, inexpressible love of the mother for her babe.

But do not consider them as they stand there on the mountain. Think of what they did to get there! Think of how they suffered, of how they starved. Think of how they ran and ran from the pursuing waters until they fell flat with utter exhaustion. Think of how they sprang up again in dismay at the menacing enemy ever on their

heels. Think of how they toiled up hill after hill; over rocks and streams and mountains and through deep forests until at last they reached this place of a moment's safety for their little one. They proved their love before they ever reached that mountain, and their love consisted in *doing* something to save the child. Their love consisted in *action*.

Not so long ago, I was talking to an American soldier who had seen a good bit of trench warfare in France. He described how sometimes the American trenches were only thirty or fifty yards from the trenches of the enemy, and between these two ditches, crowded with armed men ever on the alert for attack or repulse, there stretched a desolate, lonely strip of land swept by shell fire, rifle fire, machine gun fire. This place was called "No Man's Land."

"What was the worst thing you suffered in the trenches?" I asked him.

"Father," he said very earnestly, "it was not standing up to your knees in mud waiting for the next shell to explode in your face. It was not that, nor was it the crackling of rifle fire and the buzzing and popping of machine guns, if you but held your tin hat on your rifle half a foot above the edge of the trench. It was not that nor was it the whirring of enemy airplanes, soaring like so many buzzards over your head, waiting. It was not that. But it was to hear in the middle of the night the groans coming from No Man's Land: the groans of some poor fellow wounded and dying out there with not a soul to help him through the gates of death; with not a hand to soothe his brow and close his eyes when the

suffering and the breath should have gone. That was hard. But it was far harder to hear these strong lads crying constantly for their mother. Time and time again, in the blackness of the night, from that most desolate spot on God's earth, came the cry, 'Mother! Mother!'—and there was not a soul to help him. That, Father, was the worst of all."

Now do not look at the soldier dying there in No Man's Land. Do not consider his love for his country nor even for his mother. But look back on his life and see what it was that made the poor lad cry out for his mother. What was it but her deeds for him, her sufferings for him, her sacrifices for him, that made the soldier in the time of his greatest need cry out for the one who had done most for him in his life? For we all know that it is the mother's love that bursts into action, and it is her son, who, following a good example of love in action, can go out there on No Man's Land and die bravely for his country.

One of the young Jesuits who had just been ordained at Woodstock was telling his brethren of the wonderful reverence of the people for him just as soon as the late Cardinal Gibbons had laid hands on his head.

"What impressed you most?" asked some one, and he replied instantly that when he went to the altar-rail after his first Mass to allow the people to kiss his newly-consecrated hands, a very old lady, stooped with years but supported by two stalwart sons, took hold of his hands, looked up into his face and whispered:

"My boy, I will not kiss your hands. But let

me press my lips to the fingers that have touched the pure, sacred Body of Christ my Lord."

And she kissed the fingers that touch the Host every morning. It was a little thing, but the priest will never forget it. It was a little thing, but who will say that it did not prove the old lady's love for Our Lord?

Love is action. The greatest love was Christ's for us. We would never have been able to open the gates of Heaven for ourselves or for our children if He had not come down and died for us, nailed to a tree. His was the noblest deed of love this world shall ever know. And it was a *deed*—death. No man can merely say, "I love God."

Love is a deed. What have you done for God? Tell me that and then I shall know how you love God. Do something for your neighbor and you love your neighbor. The love of the mawkish, sentimental novel is trash. The love that is real is the greatest thing on earth and in Heaven. Feeling and emotion enter into love, of course. See a mother nestling her infant on her breast. Has she feeling for the child? Certainly. Does she talk to it and tell it how much she loves it? But her greatest love is her deed for the child. Let a robber try to take the child from her! Let some one try to injure it! Let the child grow sickly and wan. How her love bursts into action and her eyes will know no sleep, her lips will know no food until the heart of her heart is better. Deeds! Deeds! All real love consists in a deed.

St. Thomas says that the soul which loves does great things and thinks them small; does many

things and thinks them few; labors long and thinks it too short.

There is a law of gravity in love. Our actions fall by their own weight either to earth and then they are selfish, or lightly leap to God and then they are done out of love.

The Fathers of the Church commonly think that the Blessed Virgin died from love of God. If that question which her Son put to Peter had been asked of her in the days she lived on earth after the Resurrection, she could have answered it with all the fervor of her heart. "Lovest thou Me?" How she would have sighed in her answer: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," and hence it is that love carried her back to Christ, when the ways of her life were ended. There must have been another Bethlehem in Heaven when Christ welcomed His Mother among the throngs of Angels; and Gabriel, the one who had seen her as a little maid when he brought word that she was to be the Mother of God, must have seen in her eyes the same love for God that he had seen when she bowed her head and said: "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

Was not Magdalen's love a deed? She shamed herself before the sneering Pharisee and unloosed her hair and made of its beauty an instrument of lowly purpose, a towel even though it was of spun gold, and Christ submitting to her deed of love, praised her. "Many sins are forgiven her because she loved much."¹

Love makes all hard and bitter things easy. What is difficult for the worker is easy for the lover.

So when you read some foolish, mawkish novel

¹Luke vii, 47.

that drivels its nonsense about a sighing, sentimental something which the author calls love, you will know that the author is a wise man and knows how to make money with his typewriter. He is fooling you. Real love is not sentimental nor foolish. Real love is action even as Christ died for us because He loved us; even as a sword of sorrow pierced Mary's heart because she loved Him and us. Throw the novel into the fire and read the Gospels.

When our children are far from us we still love them, and the actual presence of them in the house is not at all necessary for the warmth of our love. In the same way, we do not have to see God in order to love Him with all our hearts. St. Augustine explains this. "You will say to me: I do not see God. How am I to love what I do not see? Let me show you. . . . You love your friend, but perhaps your friend is an old man. What do you love in the old man? His curved body? His white head? The wrinkles on his forehead? The drawn cheeks? You do not love the body you see, because it is deformed. Where then, do you see what you love? You answer: he is faithful, therefore, you love faith. The same eyes by which you see faith make you see God."²

Listen to Father Faber:

"Ah! only serve Jesus out of love! You cannot beat God in the strife of love! Only serve Jesus out of love, and, while your eyes are yet unclosed, before the whiteness of death is yet settled on your face, or those around you are sure that that last gentle breathing was indeed your last—oh, what an unspeakable surprise will you have had at the judgment-seat of your dearest Love,

²*Homily xxxviii, on John.*

while the songs of Heaven are breaking on your ears, and the glory of God is dawning on your eyes, to fade away no more forever!"

Action is evidence of life, and love in the home-world is proof of that life in the home which Christ desired to kindle there.

CHAPTER XII

CONSULTING THE SPECIALIST

THE question of health agitates peoples' minds more today than at any other time. Pestilence swept over the land during the last years. Its breath was death. Perhaps you saw the crowded undertakers' shops or the rough wooden coffins heaped up in the cemetery. Perhaps you know of some one who died. There is a gruesome story, quietly told, of course, that in certain places the clothes were stripped from some of the dead by vandals and the body put back a poor, cold, naked thing in the rough, unplanned and unfinished coffin. This sounds like the ancient tales of the body-snatchers, tales, you will recall, that you liked to hear because they were horrible and interesting. This is the same interest that wins a crowd of gaping idlers to the latest accident. But the whole history of the epidemic is morbid. The breath of pestilence was laden with poison and it is only the noble man who can keep his head and his smile when sudden death stalks near him.

The home-world was devastated and a mad search was on foot for the specialist who could root out the pestilence.

Now there are specialists for every kind of disease. That a man should spend his life in try-

ing to segregate a certain bacillus seems astonishing. Indeed, specialties seem absurd matters, since they are narrow by nature and sometimes infinitesimal by agreement among the specialists themselves. But when a plague like the Spanish Influenza sends your son to bed, dying, you run to the specialist who can find and root out the bacillus or germ of the disease. Then you are converted to this idea of a man seeking and learning all he can about one little thing connected with the health or death of the body.

Modern doctors lay great importance on the little, hidden things relating to health. There was a man suffering dreadfully from rheumatism. He had been on the rack for years. No relief seemed possible and yet he was cured by a dentist! What, you say! A dentist cure rheumatism! Why, I thought a dentist fixed teeth? You are right. That's what the dentist did for the rheumatic man and since the teeth caused rheumatism, and the dentist fixed the teeth, the dentist cured the rheumatism.

Health has become the world's watchword. People shudder at dirt in any form, for dirt is a breeder of disease and disease is a breeder of death. Are the teeth foul and uncared for? Nowadays almost any disease may be predicted for you. Is the stomach abused? You will regret the abuse when you are on the operating table, perhaps with cancer, perhaps with ulcers. Your heart is weak? Then strains must be avoided, if you are to keep your feet on the land of the living and your head raised among your fellows. You read a great deal in poor light? The eyes

will suffer, for there is wear and tear going on. Whatever it is, the cause of the disease must be reached and cut out, even if parts of your body are to be cut away with it. And in the beginning, little things cause disease. You have seen a thunder-storm grow gradually from some small spirals of clouds in the blue sky. You may have seen the ocean heave and roll with mountains of hungry waters that in the beginning were only little ripples on the face of the deep. So it is with disease.

The best place to see an expert searching for and cutting away the root of disease is in an operating room. The place is not at all what you imagine. The room is like an artist's studio for light and the nurses have scrubbed and cleaned it until a speck of dirt is an abomination. When the surgeon operates he is dressed in immaculate white; the instruments have been sterilized with the utmost care; the nurses too, are swathed in white; the surgeon and his assistants wear rubber gloves that no infection may result either for themselves or the patient. And when the operation is finished, how wonderfully is the patient cared for; how jealously is the wound cleansed, dressed, bound and watched. For little things are causes of big catastrophies. The little things must be avoided.

A nun once told a very sad story. There was a brilliant young surgeon who had extraordinary success in handling cases of blood-poisoning. Any infection here would mean danger of death, and this surgeon, unfortunately, had not taken proper care and so became infected. In two days he was dead, and the tiniest of cuts on his finger had ad-

mitted the deadly poison into his veins and laid him in the grave.

But this must not be forgotten. Specialists can go so far and no further. In the camps the influenza spread with heart-breaking speed. The trenches had demanded their dead but the influenza was more greedy than war. Night and day the doctors worked to discover the cause of this new disease. If they could only find the cause, something could be done. They could fight it. The specialists worked as few men have worked before, and it is due to them that any progress was made. When the cause was discovered, the soldiers' lives and the lives of the people were better protected. The death lists grew shorter.

Find the cause and you will have a chance to overcome anything that is bothering you, whether in the home or at work or anywhere else.

Now the healing of the body is easier by far than the healing of the soul. You will remember the paralyzed man whom Our Lord cured. First the soul was cured. *"Thy sins are forgiven thee."* Then, when the Pharisees cried out that Our Lord was blaspheming in arrogating to Himself this supreme power of remitting sins, Christ proved that it was easier to cure the body than it was to cure the soul. *"Whether is it easier to say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee'; or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins,"* then He said to the paralytic: *"Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house."*

Our Lord cured the man's body to prove to the doubting Jews that the man's soul was cured, that his sins had really been wiped away as easily and

as thoroughly as the paralysis. His soul arose that day and walked with the innocent and the pure. His body rose and walked into a mere human habitation. There is the difference here that one may notice in an orchestra; the second parts, when heard alone are absurd. But listen to the first violins and the flutes and the cornets either alone or with the seconds. Surely, the poor man's body was the second part of him, and if he had gone away into his house with a sprightly body and a lame soul, there never could have been any melody in the halls of Heaven, for you will notice that Christ proclaimed before the world that the man had sinned, "*Thy sins are forgiven thee.*"

Christ has handed down to His priests the same power that He Himself exercised on the paralytic's soul. The priest is the doctor of the soul. There is a need for him in your home just as oftentimes there is need for the doctor. There is no power like his. And God has given it to him for He said: "*Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them.*" As His Church is to last until the end of time, this power must also last; otherwise it were foolishly given and that would be blasphemy.

But to cure the soul, the specialist must first get to the cause of the disease. What is it? What causes the sickness of the soul? What is it that, if not wiped away, if not operated on, will send the soul into no earthly grave but into a hell whence there is no redemption? We want our souls cleaned and cured. What is the disease?

When you go to a specialist, you must explain your symptoms. He asks you all kinds of per-

sonal questions and you never hesitate to answer. The doctor, you know, does not ask out of curiosity or to tell his neighbors. You respect the fact that what you tell him will be kept a professional secret. How long would a doctor have patients if he left his consulting office, rushed out on the street, called to some passer-by—

"I say! Come over here! I've just heard something good about Mr. Jones. And as for Mrs. Smith, why, you never knew what sort of woman she was. This is what she told me, etc., etc."

Such a man would be run out of town and that would be too good for him. You know well that if you do not tell your symptoms, the doctor will not be able to find the cause of the disease. He will not be able to cure you.

The priest is the specialist of the soul. Your body's health depends on your frankness with the doctor. Your soul's health depends on your simplicity and openness with the priest, and the great and only cause of the sickness of the soul is sin, and therefore all sins must be told to the priest in order that he might cut them from your souls. What causes the most horrible scruples of conscience if not this, that you fear you may not have told the priest everything and so you fear you may not have been thoroughly cured and made healthy in God's sight.

Your secrets go into the grave with the priest. No ear will ever hear from his lips what you tell him. He has no wife to be his confidante; no children to be cause of care and jealousy. He has given himself to you and for you and his work ends with his life. Ask any Jesuit why he

studied for fifteen years before being ordained, and then why he waited and studied and planned for two years more before he was even sent out into any parish work of any account, and he will smile and say:

"Well, you see, I'm training to be a specialist and I can't know too much."

Confession is never easy, but we must obey God and confess. Neither is telling your secrets to the doctor easy, but if you want the toothache cured you must let the dentist grind away until the cavity is clear and the cause laid bare.

There is a man who lives a very holy life. He is a priest, a learned man, a wonderful confessor and adviser. Some one said to him:

"Father, I can never get used to going to Confession. I hate it!"

And the holy man answered:

"So do I. But we both know that Confession is the channel of the grace of God. I'd do almost anything to get God's grace. Wouldn't you?"

Each soul has its own disease. Perhaps it is some secret sin that has gotten a grip on the soul's health and is strangling it. It may soon carry you into the grave of hell. Why should you fear to come to the priest? His is the greatest power in the world. You are foolish to neglect it; for if you are foul with sin, you are surely dying and for you there is no hope. Don't think that the priest remembers you or your sins. He is like the doctor in this, too. For how many Confessions do you think a single priest in a large parish hears in a single day? Perhaps as many as three hundred on the eve of a Feast or even on a Saturday or before the first Friday. And if the doctor

must consult his card catalogue to recall your disease, it is safe to say that the priest does not remember as much as the doctor. But this motive is low, you say. It is. But it is also human, and a short reflection will always show the weakness of human hesitation in this matter of Confession.

God's remedy is awaiting you and the priest is the specialist to apply it. If you go frequently to the priest, your soul will be healthy and will arise and walk into the halls of Heaven. A healthy soul is sure guarantee of a happy home, and never forget that the priest is the soul-specialist just as the doctor is the specialist in matters of the body. Consult both doctors frequently.

CHAPTER XIII

MORAL COURAGE IN THE HOME

SINCE the war ended, one hears fine tales of the courage of our boys in the trenches. After all, the vast body of American troops was hurriedly recruited, scantily trained, and then rushed across the seas to take their equal share in the tornado of war, already grown with the growth of four fearful years. No one suspected that they would be afraid. Our traditions and character were against such a thing. But that they should show a bravery equal to that of the best troops of Europe made us all proud.

When you take a factory-hand from his bench and send him into the battle line, you must know your man and his character. The white-faced clerk of the department store, the bank-clerk, and the school-teacher, and the useless fellow who lounges around the corners, pass us, all unnoticed in peace times. Yet these were the men who went to France and fought with unparalleled courage.

A Chaplain said: "It's a mistake to suppose that there was any romance, or dime-novel manner, about the way our boys fought. Was there a hill to be taken? Good. The Lieutenant crouched there in the brush and surrounded by his platoon, simply said: 'Let's go, boys!' And no

matter how many machine-guns popped viciously from trees, rocks and embankments; no matter how many Prussian Guards stood massed in the way, the hill was taken."

"Let's go, boys!" And with these words the factory-hand's courage was put to the test. The clerk and the school-teacher and the idler of the corner, gritted their teeth till white knobs showed at the jaws. And they went. Training or no training, bad training or regular-army training, they went, and we know how far they went, how hard it was to go at all, and through what dense masses of bluish-gray steel, stifling gas, and hissing shells, they went to victory.

Now here are two instances of courage, one of which has no parallel in our daily home-life, while the other is forever in demand, and illustrates better than a long discourse what kind of bravery is necessary in the home-world.

There's a story of a young man in the balloon corps. Some have said that ballooning was comparatively easy. It was safer than aeroplaning, perhaps, but there were many dangers we know not of. For instance. This young man went aloft every day with four companions and the Lieutenant. They were practicing how to jump from the basket in order to escape under enemy fire. The parachute was the slender thread that supported them in the swift journey from the clouds to the ground. Their lives depended on the opening of the parachute. One day the Lieutenant had ascended to about a thousand feet.

"Now, boys, let's try the drop. You first, Pete."

So Pete, his parachute already adjusted, climbed

over the edge of the basket, hung on for a moment, and let go. The others craned their necks and watched Pete go flying through the air. After the first hundred feet, the parachute had not opened. That was usual and no one wondered. But after the second hundred feet, the parachute was still folded. This was usual, too, in a degree. But they watched and watched and went sick at the stomach. With a speed and force enough to break through half a foot of asphalt pavement, Pete shot to the ground. The parachute had stubbornly refused to open. Those who watched from the balloon-basket shuddered.

"A bad parachute, boys! Too bad! Next!"

The hesitation was slight but noticeable. Natural enough. Then the second pupil, his parachute adjusted, climbed over the edge and dropped. Johnny, they used to call him and every one loved him for his smile and good nature. Johnny's parachute never opened, and one of the boys in the balloon fainted. The Lieutenant was severely shocked but could not show it. These boys had to be trained. So he tried the next parachute on a bag of sand and the bag landed safely. A breath of relief from instructor and pupils.

"I guess it's all right now," said the Lieutenant. "Next!"

This man sailed swiftly and safely to the ground. Now the boy who had fainted was next.

"Want to go?" asked the Lieutenant kindly. "You're sick, Jim, and we can let it go at that, if you say so."

"I'm sick, all right," said Jim; "but if you say so, I'll go."

"Well, let's see. Two didn't open and two

did. You're the fifth and things may break either way. But I've got to carry out orders. What shall I do?"

"Say the word," said Jim, and the Lieutenant did.

But Jim was so weak that he had to be helped over the edge of the basket and when he dropped, the Lieutenant, being alone in the car and not having any pupils to edify, turned away and refused to look. When the balloon descended, he saw a small group surrounding a badly crumpled object, stretched out flat on the grass.

"Three didn't open," he said, and felt the sob stick in his throat.

He was wrong. Jim had landed safely, but on the way down he had managed to faint three or four times.

"Were you afraid?" I asked him later on.

He looked at me in amazement. "Father, I was never so afraid in my life, as when I sat there on the edge of that basket."

And I walked away realizing that this man, simply because he was so very much afraid, was for that reason all the more brave, when he did his duty. I felt proud of Jim.

Now comes the story of a higher kind of courage, that kind which the home is always demanding.

American courage did not stop with mere physical achievement. One Sergeant told me how most of his regiment went to Confession on the eve of battle. It happened in a small French village close to the St. Mihiel sector. The regiment had been making forced night-marches, and the men were tired. The heavy packs were so much lead on

their shoulders; they were half-starved and poorly rested and the pay-wagon and kitchens had been lost in the mud and rain and winding ruts called roads. So when the regiment halted in the village, the men simply removed their tin hats, planked them down in the mud, sat on them and went to sleep.

The sergeant had noticed a convent on the hill and he saw a chance to get Confession. He climbed the hill, tired and fagged though he was, found a nun who could speak English and explained what he wanted. There was no priest there. She would send to the other village for the old Curé, but he could not speak English. So while the Curé hurried to the convent, the nun searched for a certain Confession card, very old and seldom used up to this time. She found it at last and showed the Sergeant how he was to make his Confession in English to the priest, who spoke nothing but French.

"You take the card, point out in English what you have done and the Curé reads the French. Over here you point out the number of times."

This was simple but did not appeal to the Sergeant. Yet he was brave, and so kneeling down he made his Confession with his finger, as he said.

Going back down the hill, he grinned as he thought of his cronies going to Confession that way. No one would have the courage. But he harangued several groups.

"Boys, we're only a few miles from the front lines and we may not have another chance. There's a priest up there on the hill waiting for you. I told him you'd all be there. And it's the easiest thing you ever did. You don't have to say

a word. You just point out things with your finger."

So, half-curious and very serious-minded, for death was near enough to many of them, they went up the hill in groups, and surrounded the Curé, while the Sergeant and the nun explained the method. One old soldier shook his head.

"It's a deaf-and-dumb Confession," he said.

"It's too public for me," said another. "Why, all you fellows would know what I was pointing out, wouldn't you?"

"We wouldn't look," said the Sergeant, "and besides we know what you ought to point out anyhow."

"Why did Baker give us a Lutheran Chaplain?" groaned another.

Now just when one group was bolting, the Sergeant saw the Major coming up the hill and was afraid for a moment that trouble was brewing. But the officer had heard that there was a chance to go to Confession and wanted to take advantage of it. Every one knew that the Major was a brave man, but the Sergeant thought that his commander might not like to go to Confession in this public manner. The Sergeant was wrong. The Major had used the card before and kneeling down with great simplicity, before the eyes of almost all his men, he made his Confession. And when he went away, he left a long line of tired and determined soldiers waiting before the old French Curé to make their Confessions with their fingers.

A few days later, more than half the regiment was killed. The Major, too. But the Sergeant thought that while all had been brave in that

awful half hour in the woods, the Major was bravest when he went to Confession on the hill.

It is the old, old story. One act of physical courage is superb. No one can doubt that. The blood warms and leaps within us when we hear of the deed. But while we do not thrill so much at moral courage, we know that it requires a bigger and finer soul.

Now the factory-hand and the clerks and the teachers and the corner idlers have returned from the battles to civil life. All are lean, sturdy, brown and unafraid. They are now in the home-world again. Can't you see that in civil life, in the home, there are more occasions for the practice of moral courage, than there was for the practice of physical courage in the war days?

CHAPTER XIV

THE BANE OF THE HOME WORLD

THE age is really one of superficiality. We look no deeper than the face of things. Men are hidden from us and great depths do not appeal. The excuse we offer for this contentment with surface nothings is the hurry of the age. "Today," we explain learnedly, "is different from the past. This is an age of money-making, of progress in material things, and utility is the watchword."

Now second thought shows us that we are deceiving ourselves. Indeed, we ought to see at once that veneering is not a useful thing to cover faults, no matter how appropriate for defects in wood and paint and crockery and the like. Our excuse of hurry, too easily satisfies in our self-condonement, and all the time we know that hurry is not even a good veneer.

There is a violent hurry in all life and in all times of the world. The leading motive for the hurry is not always the same. In St. Margaret Mary's day, and that is not so long ago, there was a hurry and bustle just as there is today, and in her own life there was the greatest hurry in attaining the ideal of her soul, selflessness. Here is the great contrast between her saintly life and ours in this hurry-up day even in the home-world that should be so holy; we are all hurrying

towards a goal that is self, proclaimed in large electric-sign letters; she hurried through her few years of life towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the increase and spread of devotion to that Heart of love.

Who today says that there is great love in the world either for God or our fellow men? The great love of the time is the love of self, and every great effort of the day seems to be aimed at the betterment of self. The gentle St. Margaret Mary had forgotten self long before the age of twenty-four, when she entered the Visitation Convent of Paray-le-Monial. During her remaining years, nineteen, she more and more cast self into the background, and in the end was absorbed in the Heart of love whose interests she had been chosen to spread. It is just in this one point that our day differs from hers; love of self and love of God. One means that God melts into the dimness of the picture, while the other really means that we efface self, not so much before the eyes of men, as before our own eyes. This is the great task we should set ourselves in trying to imitate the life of Margaret Mary, and if we are to succeed at all, we must start with the correct view of why we are hurrying and for what we hurry. Selfishness is the greatest bane of the home.

Now it is easy to find fault with ourselves and others. It is quite another matter to know how to correct our faults and then to have the strong will necessary to apply the bitterest medicine to the open sore. The sting will be felt and naturally we shrink from the sting. The noise and bustle and mad rush of the age we see when we

think over the thing, but the remedy we do not clearly perceive until we study such a life as Margaret Mary's. The remedy she teaches is selflessness, and at once we do appreciate the appropriateness of the cure. Have we the grim strong will to apply to the cure to the sore? This means, in another way, have we the courage to set about forgetting ourselves and loving God above all things?

The surge of labor and the reflux of capital interest us; the depreciation of money and the lavish coining of more, are important in our eyes; the growth of earnings and the leaps of the food-prices hold our attention above all things else; the whole ocean of industrial life, home life, productive and receptive life, passive and active life, intellectual, mercantile, diplomatic, economic and religious life—all seem to be under the influence of whimsical cross-winds and undercurrents that threaten the future good of the nation and the present good of the individual.

So we argue, but in reality, is not the whole argument summed up in these words: How will this affect *me*? Underneath all the ocean of life, underneath all the change, the one important, primary matter is: *How will this affect me?* There is the *self* sticking out prominently under the guise of future prosperity and present advancement. Big words and vague terms cover the one essential thing in the world today and that thing is Self.

In Margaret Mary's day human nature was not very different. Self was as prominent as it is today, but she lived a sermon against the tendency of her day, and her saintliness brought out

of the skies of Heaven the Heart of the Man-God filled with love for these poor selfish men, and in the devotion which was entrusted to her care, is to be found the remedy for our greediness. Love of the Sacred Heart is an antidote for the sickness of selfishness in the home.

It seems altogether out of place to mention St. Margaret Mary in connection with this materialistic age, but second thought reveals in her the pointed contrast to the lives we lead. When she lay dying at the early age of forty-three, she kept repeating: "What have I in Heaven and what do I desire on earth but Thee alone, O my God!" And it is in these words that we perceive, as in a flash of light her whole life, her whole mission. She was absorbed in God, lived for Him and His Heart, and the only good things she found in life were good simply because they were God's or led her to God. The hungry desire men have for the mere material good things of life is so characteristic of us today that the future will mark us with that undesirable stamp, selfishness. The motive force dragging and impelling men is selfishness, and after all the toil and suffering to put self on the pedestal and adore it, we awake suddenly to the realization that we have lost the finer, purer comforts of life, of family contentment, of a home, of the old-fashioned simplicity that held God in the first place, self in the second and the fellow man in the same second place. These, finally, are the great necessary relations of man, to God, to self, to the fellow man, and last of all, to the things, material and intellectual, that are connected with life. We cannot escape these relations, and when the curtain is drawn at the end of life, we

shall be forced to answer very definite questions about our responsibility in regard to them.

That a woman who hid herself away in a Visitation convent for nineteen years should suddenly stand before us preaching the remedy for the world's present-day disease, is only one of the apparent contradictions God has been pleased to show us. The story of her short life is certainly a surprise for the people we meet in the street cars, the subways, or the railroad trains. Visions, revelation, terrible bodily mortifications, fast scourgings to blood, persecutions, contempt, revilings—what do these mean to the motorman or the conductor, to the banker counting his gold eagles, to the army officer planning how to defend a fort, to the man at the factory bench and the girl at the typewriter or the loom? What does her life of absorption in God mean to any one of us, if it is not to preach boldly the remedy for our ills: love of God, forgetfulness of self?

Her mission was to propagate a devotion of love, the love of Christ's Sacred Heart; she was to show men the unrequited love of the Saviour for selfish man, and especially for the selfish man in the present day. The heart is the symbol of love among men, and Christ's Heart is the symbol of His love for men, besides being worthy of our adoration as part of His Sacred Body united to the Divine Person. Love is what the heart signifies and what the heart wants. We were born to be loved and to love. When life is barren of love it is not worth living, and yet even in the most desolate moments of life there can always be the holiest love for the Heart of Christ, just as St. Margaret Mary felt this holy love inflame

her soul when the hours were darkest and her soul in deep distress.

Now love is the great unknown of the day. It is the x in the equation which men find impossible of solution. Men today smile tolerantly at the word "love." They deny that the thing exists.

"Love has gone out of life," they cry; "nothing is left but humanitarianism, which after all is only another and more subtle form of selfishness."

To many, many men, life consists in the answer to this question: How much are you getting out of yourself and others and everything round about you? Love! It is a word for a romance, for youth to brood over in the moonlight. The awakening comes later with the realization that the human heart has been fooled in chasing a filmy nothing.

And Margaret Mary at once preaches the remedy. God loved us. We do not love God. We are wrapped up in unhappiness because we are wrapped up in self. God is Love. He asks for our love, and yearns to love us. He is grieved at our coldness. Your life will be happy, your home-world blessed, your day will be a day of joy, if you once discover that all life is aiming at Heaven and God.

While not at once apparent, the life of St. Margaret Mary has a wonderful connection with the present age and our own homes. Her life is the clear light that throws into prominence our shortcomings, and most of all our selfishness. We feel a yearning for the better things, and we need not go far to find them all. The heart of Jesus Christ is the treasure-house of all happiness, and the price of true unhappiness, whether in our homes or in the great world outside the front door, is exclusive love of self.

CHAPTER XV

THE CRADLE OF CATHOLIC LEADERS

THERE is no question of the need of Catholic leaders. That is taken for granted. The necessity for such men and women among the laity stares us in the face. We cannot avoid the issue. Nowadays organization is essential to success. That is certainly more true today than it ever was before in the history of the world. Everything, even Protestantism, is being systematized and the basis is usually money and the object, the acquirement of money. Now to have organization of the right kind, it is absolutely necessary to have, first of all, leaders. The organizers are needed more than the organizations but, given one, we have the other, and we must pray for the training of these organizers, and help train them in the shelter of our homes.

There is pressing need for the trained Catholic laymen in political and official life. The military and naval departments should have their generous sprinkling of Catholic leaders. Parliamentary and diplomatic life is a vast field of usefulness for God and country. Business could be well salted with Catholic morals and profiteering stopped, and here it is that perhaps the largest field opens for the ordinary Catholic to lead his fellow business man and teach him by solid prac-

tical example that healthy business cannot be separated from religious principles. Ask your physician if there is not a lamentable need of Catholic leaders in the medical and kindred professions. Is law capable of betterment by men trained in Catholic morality? And so it goes with every field of endeavor. The trained men of other faiths or no faith at all are looking to the Catholics for the right thing to do. There is the responsibility and the burden. Suppose that the training is not all it should be, and it becomes evident at once that men will look to Catholics in vain for what is higher and nobler. The influence then of the home-world is incalculable in the formation of leaders. Home is their cradle.

Men will follow a leader. This fact has been demonstrated in boyhood and there is a great deal of boyishness in all men. Today people stand in need of the man to lead them. The people look here and there searchingly for the Napoleon of the hour. No one appears who dares answer their questions, and the simple reason is that the training of these so-called leaders has left them with the husks of an answer and that is all they have.

A Senator who was campaigning for the Presidential nomination returned from one of his tours and met a colleague in the Senate corridor. A serious conversation followed.

"The thing that struck me," said the Senator, "was the eager attitude of the people. They sit there in front of you, hanging on your words, begging you to answer their difficulties. They were simply holding out their hands, pleading like little children for some solution of the problems confronting this nation today.

"They will follow a leader," he continued, "and the great pity is that the leader cannot be found."

He might have added that when some one does push himself forward he lacks, frequently, the training in sound moral principles essential to a true leader. How can such a man solve the moral and sociological problems when he himself has had no real training in morals? Generally speaking, the leadership of non-Catholics is founded on individuality of character. The man is the law in many such cases. The early training cannot be made to answer these modern questions so urgently in need of an answer, for the early training has frequently been as shallow as the systems of philosophy and ethics taught in Protestant colleges today.

During the war, men willingly placed their lives in the hands of their leaders. General Pershing held several million lives in his palm. It was his word that sent a division into the roar and din of battle. It was his mere word that sent thousands to look closely into the gray bony face of death. Victory for the country was his sole desire. That had to be gained. He had been trained by the country to win victories and yet he loved the lives of his soldiers and saved them where he could. Victory came as the combined result of a trained leader and a willing army of badly trained millions.

The formation of the National Army was hotly discussed at Washington. Senators and Representatives stood on the floor of Congress and debated the advisability of the draft. One of the main reasons for opposing a vast military system was the lack of leaders, trained men in whom the troops could confide. If the Congress called to the

colors millions of young men fresh from the mild pursuits of civil life, and hurried them off to the red fields of France against a well trained, powerful military machine, who would be responsible for their lives? Who would answer to the country, to the mothers of these brave boys? Their officers, naturally. For to the officers, the leaders, the soldiers look for life and safety and victory and, if need be, death.

But the Congress had no officers to guide four millions of men into battle. True, there were West Pointers, but these men were all too few. They had been trained in the school of war and now that war was ravaging the world, it was their training only that could make millions of American young men march in steady rhythm up to the cannon's mouth, and into thick woods festered with machine-gun nests. That problem of officers for the men was met by the officers' training schools. Camps were formed for intensive training, the colleges were commandeered by the Government, and on the college men of the country rested the hopes of the millions. It is a natural thing to turn to educated men when a crisis threatens, and it proved no exception during the war.

There are twenty million Catholics in the country. Their leaders among the clergy are famous. No other body can point to such an array of varied, educated talent and abundant manly energy. The utterance of the Catholic Episcopate on the problems of the day and their solution has aroused the admiration of friend and foe alike. Why will you find leaders like the pastors and curates, the religious men and women,

of the Catholic Church in this country? No other body can boast of such self-sacrificing leaders. These men and women have given their lives and their all for the sheep in the great Shepherd's pasture. They can do no more, and if you ask what influence is running like a golden thread through their lines, you will discover that they were all nursed in leadership at their mothers' breasts. Their homes made them leaders.

It is then to the Catholic laity that the Church looks for the sturdy men and prudent modest women, to lead the great mass of Catholics in the way they should walk. And not Catholics alone! A Catholic leader cannot but influence all those around him. And this should be remembered. The path to be walked is not always or not solely the path to church. That path is pointed out in great measure by the clergy and the nuns and the parents. The path that needs the sign-post most is the wide path of every-day life whereon it is well nigh impossible for the priest and nun to walk. There is a road to the White House, to the National Senate, to the State Legislatures, to the Municipal Courts and Governments. Here is a field for leaders, well walked already but with plenty of room for the trained man.

There is a David Ignatius Walsh of Massachusetts, who can stand on the floor of the United States Senate and speak thrillingly of the problems of the day and, what is more, present a solution for them that has been founded on Catholic ethics. We need not go far in our own districts to find men and women who are forging ahead for the one reason that they can stand up before their fellows and say:

"This is your problem. This is the only sane answer to it. I have been trained to see that problem and to meet it with this answer, and, if I am to be your leader, I shall see to it that laws are passed embodying the principles I now present to you."

And what are these principles? Catholic ethics and the whole system of Catholic philosophy. These are the weapons of a trained Catholic leader, and you can do no better thing for the training of Catholic leaders than to send your boy or girl to Catholic schools and colleges where these principles are taught. By doing that you are training leaders in the right Catholic foundations of Christian life and morality. That is what the Catholic school is for, to train leaders, and just as the world war demonstrated the dependence of the masses on educated men, so the after-war life will demonstrate the absolute dependence of the entire country on the solutions of Catholic leaders. There will be no sane ending of perplexities without these principles and these trained men.

Some Catholics are diffident in assuming leadership. Diffidence here is vitally bad. No leader ever gets a sounder training than the Catholic student. If men and women are crying aloud for leaders, if Catholics hold the only sensible answer to the modern difficulties, why should Catholics hesitate to take hold of the reins, why should Catholics hesitate to train the future generations for just this kind of leadership?

Now arrogance is a besetting sin of leaders, and in praying for Catholic leaders and their training, ask the Sacred Heart to make them learned and

prudent and brave, yes, but also humble with the great humility of our leader Christ, who could die on a cross to lead men to Heaven. And after all, is Catholic leadership for the honor of the man or for God?

With the authority of leadership comes responsibility. Obligation is the essential effect of law, and obligation is founded ultimately on the will of God. If, then, you train your boy and girl for Catholic leadership, be sure you pray that they be well conformed to the will of God, in success as well as in failure.

And with all the responsibility, there is a wonderful satisfaction in guiding your fellow man. Your work may be anywhere, in factory, or store or office, but you can be a Catholic leader in your life and feel this satisfaction. Sweet will be the bread of those who lead men to God. It is too true that life speaks louder than words, and the great popularity of Catholic leaders is due to the sanctity and simplicity of their lives.

There is an old man in France and his name is written in imperishable history. Foch, the "gray man of Christ," is a leader of men, a trained Catholic leader, and today with all his fame as a mighty military genius, it is his simplicity of life, his humility before his God, that speaks to the world more shrilly than the brazen trumpet acclaims him.

The great Marshal, in a speech delivered at Georgetown University, on November 16, 1921, said this:

"In 1871 I left the Jesuit College of St. Clement's at Metz to pursue a military career, and now as my life nears to its close I again find

myself within the walls of an old Jesuit College. I can no longer salute the Reverend Fathers of my youth, but I am happy for this opportunity to salute their worthy successors.

"I attribute the successes of my life to the two great principles taught me in those days: The Love of God and the Love of Country. We cannot have everything in life as we would have it, but we can at least remain true to the principles of God and of truth; and if we do this, no matter what troubles rage around us, all will be well."

The same is true of our own great leaders, like Admiral Benson, Senators Ransdall, Ashurst and Walsh, and the lamented Chief Justice, Edward Douglas White, whose life was a blessing to the nation, and many, many others whose success and fame have not built a barred door between themselves and God or their fellow man.

Charity begins at home. Your leadership should not begin anywhere else. And inside your home is your heart, and if there is pulsing in the blood of your heart, the real love for Christ, you will train your heart first of all to lead itself by the divine Model. The heart, the home, the parish, the country, all depend on the Heart of Christ.

CHAPTER XVI

WORK

WORK has been defined as the serious occupation of the human race, and as such, it is worth a short consideration.

Roughly divided, work is mental and physical. Mental toil is had when the mind is most of all occupied, as in study or meditating, unraveling the tangled threads of political problems; preparing an examination, or bending the stubborn waywardness of the mind to think on God in prayer.

Now the man who mends pavements or fires the boilers of the locomotive is engaging his bodily energies; and seriously, too, for the work itself is important, strenuous surely, and the money which is its partial reward, buys the bread for the children, pays the rent, and binds his little home-world together. Work keeps the proverbial wolf away from the front door.

Toil, though imposed as the penance for sin, has become the solace for woes, and what Lowell says is true, that:

No man is born into this world whose work
Is not born with him.

The two are inseparable, man and toil, and many times, I think, in our lives have we thanked

God for the grace of toiling when the clouds of sorrow scowled threateningly.

Toil whether mental or physical, is the sad fortune of man. He cannot escape it. He may complain naively like Charles Lamb and say that a "Sabbathless Satan" invented work, but the saying is false.

Who first invented work, and bound the free
And holiday-rejoicing spirit down

To that dry-drudgery at the desk's dead wood?

Sabbathless Satan!

"Why do we all labor?" asks St. Augustine. And he gives the reason that "we are all mortal men, weak and infirm, carrying earthen vessels, with which our fellow men come into painful collision."¹

"The labor we delight in physics pain," said Shakespeare, and the truth lies here. Many a man consoled his heart by slaving with his hands; and often has the mother's bosom yearned less eagerly for the lost babe because her hands were wet with soap-suds.

Toil is our lot. Even before Adam sinned, man was commanded to toil. In the description of creation we read this: "And the Lord took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure to dress it and keep it."²

Hence the toil was born with man but not, of course, toil in bitter sweat of the brow and repugnant to the guiding will of Adam. The care of paradise was to be a pleasant work in the literal

¹Sermon lix. ²Gen. ii.

sense of those words, and not a penance as work afterwards became.

So it is today even, for many occupations that appear toilsome are really recreations for those engaged in them. Vacation is not idle staring at the sun, or watching the clouds swing along the skies, or waves ripple along the white sandy beach. Many men get their best rest by a change of work. Thus it has been known that a very good banker found his joy in writing fine criticisms of literary works; and cutting down huge trees is nowadays the recreation of a former Emperor, as it once was the whetstone whereon Gladstone sharpened his wits. The point of view is interesting in this matter of work. Men hasten to the country for vacation time. They want to run the farm. The farmer cannot understand how a city man will pay money to be allowed to milk the cows or pitch hay.

Again how strange it is to hear a laborer commiserating with a scholar on the dreadful books he has to read! How strange to hear a plumber remark that he preferred his work to the professor's. When the salesman said: "I can sell that poor fellow anything. He's a scholar,"—he did not utter a universal truth, but the reason added that "he'll buy to get rid of me," is illuminating, for it has been generally said that scholars are no good in business. Mind-toil, it would seem, gathers misty clouds about the thinker's head; he has no time, no inclination, no judgment often enough, to answer the noisy salesman who is crying the worth of potatoes and cabbage; pork and beans; hats and trousers; shoes and neckties. All these mundane affairs are weighted heavily with

their own commonplace stupidity and usefulness, and so will never soar into the scholar's fog-world of the mind.

But the mental toiler balances the hand toiler. To say that work is done only by the hands and machinery is a sad error. There was a brain back of the machine and probably the brain moulded the machinery only after hours and hours of patiently watching human hands in their puny creative efforts. After all, is not the machine that bursts forth triumphantly from the inventor's brain, only a series of human hands working rapidly together and multiplied? Man-made machinery is only an imitation of the machinery God first made.

Brain-toil is real toil and harder than mere bodily toil. Both are necessary. The marvel is that brain-workers feel their exhaustion keenly and sigh for manual labor, while the opposite is far from true. The laborer may envy the brain-worker his white collar and cuffs, his clean clothes and well-groomed appearance, but how few there are among the laborers who ever desire brain-work, toil with books, with typewriters and pens, with all those things attached to the white-collar man as his weapons and his uniform?

Work is necessary, for eating depends on it. St. Paul told the Thessalonians: "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing, but in labor and in toil we worked night and day, lest we should be chargeable to any of you. Not as if we had not power; but that we might give ourselves a pattern unto you to imitate us. For also when we were with you, this we declared to you; that if any man will not work, neither let him eat. For

we have heard that there are some among you who have walked disorderly, working not at all, but curiously meddling. Now we charge them that are such, and beseech them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that working, they would eat their own bread."³

The father of the family must furnish forth food for his household. His work is needed not only for his own happiness but for the happiness of all in the house. The saving, thrifty, industrious father, and the wise, careful mother, who makes her husband's salary go as far as possible, form the ideal basis for the happy home-world. By his thrift and industry the father stores the harvest and the days of his gray hair will be days of peace and plenty. It is a wise man who has visions of the harvest but wiser far is he who allows not the burning heats of summer to deter him from toil. The harvest of autumn never grows from the laziness of summer. "The things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age?" asks the Scripture,⁴ and St. Cyprian expands this idea. "As the fruit is not found on the tree on which the flower has not first appeared, so he who does not prepare the harvest in his youth by toiling, will not gather it in his old age."

Hence work is necessary for our sustenance, and that our children may not leave the dinner table hungry. Can you imagine any more miserable heart than the mother's as she sees the thin cheek of her child grow thinner; the blood grow paler; the muscles thin; the eyes round and brilliant with the longing for a piece of bread? No

³11 *Thess.* iii, 8-11. ⁴*Ecclus.* xxv, 5.

father can regret the sweat of his labor when he sees his children satisfying themselves with the food he has won by toil. "Man is born to labor and the bird to fly,"⁵ said the false comforter of Job, and as the bird would belie its nature by not flying so the man is no real man who does not work.

For sluggard's brow the laurel never grows,
Renown is not the child of indolent repose.⁶

Now it is not so much what our work is that matters. We may spend our days peering into watches or engines; making socks or books; washing gold or clothes—it makes not a whit of difference. The banker locked away in the room where he perfects his schemes for cornering the market; the colored boy who shines the brass on the door-knobs; the clerk wrinkling his brows over columns of figures; the scrub-woman laden with bucket and mop—all are working, and the only thing that really counts is the intention with which they work. If the scrub-woman scrubs for God and the banker invests money for the devil, the scrub-woman is better off than the banker. Or if the negro boy is struggling to buy his home and save for the rainy day of sickness and the banker is working merely to gather more money, then the boy is a better workman and a greater reward is promised him.

Our toil is worthless if we eliminate God from it, and we should never work until we have asked the question: "Just why am I working?"

Remember that honest toil such as this is the devil's defeat, and the old advice that when the

⁵Thomson. ⁶Job v. 7.

devil comes, let him find you working, is more true today than ever. Idleness is the root of evil, the devil's paradise. If he can keep man from toil, he will busy him with sin, and a short-hour day is not always a help to heaven.

We have fine examples to urge us on cheerfully in our work. Christ during His life on earth, labored at a carpenter's bench for the bread His Blessed Mother ate. Later on He taught the twelve fisherman for three years, and that class was anything but bright and intelligent. How the Mother of God worked at Nazareth? She did not fear to put her hands into the wash-tub, or into the dish-pan, and even if modern girls will call such labor beneath them, it was not disdained by the Blessed Virgin. She had no hired servants to do the lowly offices of the house and it is startling to think of Our Lord paying the bills of that home by labor with hammer and saw and chisel. Any man with such an example before him will never think that work was invented by Sabbathless Satan and that it has no honest place in our lives. St. Joseph, while he lived, worked at his trade and bought bread for the Child and Its Mother. Was ever labor more richly rewarded than that of Joseph?

Later on, after Our Lord's Ascension, the Blessed Mother surely did not sit around the home of St. John and do nothing. It must have been her example that inspired the Apostles and early Christians with that zeal and energy which built up the infant Church so rapidly and so well. We read of St. Paul boasting that he ate no man's bread but his own which he earned as a tent-maker, and in modern days we have but to look at

the labors of Xavier to be convinced that all great men worked, either with brain or hand, or both.

Now you may suffer disappointment in your toil. Like flowers that fade and dry up and droop in the heat of the summer sun because they have not been nourished with cooling waters, you may find the results of your labors small and insignificant. You may be like the Apostles, who labored all night and caught nothing. But remember that at the bidding of Christ, they persevered and their nets could not hold the catch. If they had become discouraged and gone off in disgust, their nets would have remained empty. The rose is plucked from the bush at the risk of getting a thorn thrust into your finger, and the results of labor are obtained only after much toil and worry and disappointments. Perseverance, doggedness, win the prize.

Again it is well to remember that the beginning is not so much to be praised as the crown of the work. He who sows the seed has only started to work. The joy of all toil is in its purpose, not in its material rewards, and the crop is in the toil and the seed both. Pray God for a good beginning; offer Him the toil itself, and when you have finished and the harvest is yours, tell God that He gave the increase and you did nothing but place His life-giving seed in the earth. Labor is the salvation of many men, and when you labor for a home, you have pleasant toil such as Adam had in taking care of Paradise.

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER YOUR VACATION

NOW that you have again taken up the burden of your work, cast a glance back at the good time you had on vacation. Then, if you are courageous enough, look bravely into the eyes of the coming year. Come up on a mountain peak. There to the right are the fair fields of the country, the rivers, the brooks, the hills and mountains, and afar in the distance the wonderful sea. That was your vacation ground. You had a good time there. You hated to leave those toys of the human race in summer time.

But now turn to the left and look down from the mountain peak again. You see a number of small hills, rising one on the other, and in the distance a large lump of mountain. The achievement of the coming year for you will be to climb each small hill, one after the other, until you reach the large lump. Then, if you climb that, you have done your work well and deserved another vacation. Then you may come down from the mountain and choose your playground.

You were wise, I hope. You played hard when you had the chance just as you work hard now. The reason for playing was the rest you obtained, the new elasticity acquired by your body and mind, the freshness of spirit apparent in your clear

steady eyes and in the flush of your cheeks when the breezes of mountain or seashore blew the cobwebs from your brain. No one can doubt but that a year of earnest work does weave cobwebs in the head, and to rid yourself of these is to win the reward of playing hard. Elasticity, lightness, alertness, a quick reflex between ideas and actions, these you obtained from the money spent on yourself last summer.

During the coming year you will work as hard as you played, and your pay will be the money necessary for you and yours to live. Pay for work is one of the very pleasant things in life. The sense of achieving twenty, thirty, fifty or a hundred dollars a week for a week's faithful work has its legitimate expression in the smiling face, the sparkling eye and the springy step. You achieve when you work hard.

There is also real achievement when you play hard. There is betterment of the body, and consequent lightening of the mind and the eagerness for deeds again. It is the relation of cause and effect. The body weighs down the mind. When the body is put in splendid physical condition, the mind responds. Views of life change, and lips that seemed as if they could never loosen into a smile, now lift wide and high in hearty laughter.

This is really the story of life: work, rest, work. The rest includes enjoyment, not only outside the work we have done, but in the work itself. We do something, finish it, contemplate it, and sing a little song to ourselves when we find the work worth while. We are good pupils when we do this, for God taught us the method. He worked and looked at His work and saw that it was good,

and rested. He achieved a world, was pleased with it, since it was an image of His perfection, and rested. We cannot work well without making the work an image of ourselves. The thing we effect is only an image of the form in our minds. What is good we admire. We cannot help it, though it may not be permitted to talk out loud about our greatness. But there is this difference between the Great Worker, God, and man: God never loses interest in His work. From the first days of the world to the present day and through the vistas of the future, He conserves His work in that same perfection which He intended for it. We lose interest, not so much because we want to, but because we are weak and pitiful even in our greatest achievement. If we could make a blade of grass, we would not lose interest in it.

When, therefore, God sees us taking a few days off in the summer, He understands that we are imitating Him and He approves, if (and this is a very big *if*) we do not lose His friendship because we went on a vacation. To lose God by taking a rest from our work is certainly no way of imitating Him, and may there be no consciousness in your hearts, as you look back on the days of the summer! If there is such a consciousness, you know clearly from the pain of experience that you robbed yourself of all summer delights when you robbed yourself of God.

Half measures in work or play are not worth while. Work with all your might and play with all your might. The difficulty seems to be that we want to play always. We would willingly disprove what Shakespeare says about all holidays being no holidays.

If all the year were playing holidays
To sport would be as tedious as to work.
But when they seldom come, they wished for come.

And we would rather quote the poet against himself in the following:

Present mirth hath present laughter,
What's to come is still unsure.

Would it have been better to save the money by staying home, moping and adding *avoids* to your humor? Would it have been better to save the money at the expense of your health and the slowing down of the whole bodily machine? Would it have been advisable to save fifty dollars and present a grouchy frown to all beholders for the coming year?

These alternatives are not attractive. The cost and the pay were balanced, if you played hard, and—remember this—if you did not lose God on the trip up the river to His mountains, or to His seashore, or to His open country. If you lost God, even for a day, even for a moment by one action, you would better have stayed at work and attained the grouch. To put the soul into a dirty mud-bath is not the purpose of the summer vacation. A sand-rub is a painful thing for the body, but a sin-rub stuns the immortal soul, and it were better to let the champion prize-fighter pound you into a mass of bleeding humanity than to pound your soul into disease and death, when you were on vacation. That's true! No vacation for the body is ever worth the destruction of the soul. And you know the dangers of vacation. People seem to think that the summer is the proper time

to return to primitive savagery and throw a blotch on the beautiful screen of God's summer-time. Isn't it a fact that many try to approach the uncivilized barbarian of the South Seas or inland Africa by their manners and dress?

The railroad stations in vacation time were like huge department stores on a grand bargain day. Women of all sizes (pardon!), colors (pardon!), races, degrees of heat and vexation, rushed hither and yon laden with all varieties of suit-cases, bags, umbrellas, parasols and hat-boxes. The men (just as bad but not showing it so plainly!) sauntered or ran, smoked their cigarettes and cigars, toted expensive golf-bags tennis racquets, fishing poles and bags, and tried to look indifferent to their white ducks or Palm Beach or mohair suits. It was a group of men of all sorts rushing like schoolboys for a holiday; close-shaved, ruddy, brisk, eyes alight with the prospect of woods, rivers, and the sea—the sea! The stations formed a grand moving picture in colorful action, and the character-observer found all types present in the throng and he found most of them good.

Then later on at the hotels of the resorts you met the same crowds and the same types. You could not tell the employer from the employee, the millionaire from his clerk, the society lady from the maid who takes care of her dog. Good clothes and the grand air prevailed among all classes. Indeed, there were no classes, just Americans out for the holidays. One class, though, you could always detect, because the eye cannot help seeing colors. That is what forces the eye to see, and the girls who believed that facial beauty comes

in glass jars and boxes and lip-sticks and eye-stainers, certainly forced the eye to see them. Your pity for their ignorance gave credit to your good taste and intelligence, for the poor misguided girls took away from the buoyancy of the summer scene. These girls might have been the devil's gold-bricks, but let us hope, unconsciously.

We will not mention mosquito bites, lightning bugs and gnats; katy-dids and katy-didn'ts all night long; we will not mention the mournful cow-bell that refused to allow sleep to knit up the raveled sleeve of care; we will not mention the dread of threatening clouds that would have destroyed the parasol made only to heighten your complexion; we will not mention the various shades of sunburn, brilliant reds, pinks, light and dark browns, to be followed later on by pleasant blisters. In this retrospect of the vacation we pass over all the nasty things at which you laughed afterwards. You will notice, however, that the incidents and accidents you take such pleasure in recounting now, were not so pleasant then. When the boat upset, for instance, it was pleasant only in retrospect. When the bees chose your head for a hive, well, not even retrospect can make that pleasant. When you found your clean linen collars actually melted just when you were going to a dance with some one you liked very much, well, that too was not mentionable, either then or now. "Distance lends enchantment to the view," but all in all it was a good time if—(here's that *if* again!)—if you kept tight hold of God's right hand all the time you were enjoying yourself.

Now be brave and look down from the mountain. There's a year of work to be done. Be

glad that you have it. A poor railroad worker told me during the hard times that he had made only five dollars in four months, and he had dependent on him a wife and small children and a father and mother. If you have work, do it with all your might and thank God that you have it. Work hard and efficiently and achieve something for yourself and for God. Offer the work as you surely offered your vacation to Him, the Giver of all good gifts. Surely, work is a gift nowadays and a good one. When you land back from Atlantic City, the old office may not appeal to you. The factory is drab and dun and all dark colors, a dreadful contrast to the mountains and rivers. All indoors whether at desks or benches, typewriters or sewing machines, classrooms or printing presses, yes, and all outdoors, whether you are at the wheel of a motor-car or on the platforms of trolleys, all this is work and it will last, please God, till next summer. "A long time," you say. But that is the burden of life—work, play, work. That is one of the punishments of sin, for we must earn our bread by the sweat of our brows. We must work. Let us do it well, thoroughly, efficiently, with all our might. We ought never to be ashamed to play hard if we work hard, but only the man who can work hard knows how to play hard.

Thank God for the vacation, first, because you had the means to go away for the time and gain the strength for the year's work; and second, because He gave you the open skies, the broad back of the sea, the green shoulders of the mountains, the pleasant bosom of the rivers, the cool, placid mountain pools, as your vacation places. God is

surely near us in the wide outdoors. We become little in gazing at His work for us, but if we beg His help and be cheerful about the future, we shall find Him smiling at us in the work we now have to do.

CHAPTER XVIII

PLAYING OURSELVES INTO HEAVEN

TO win Heaven is usually spoken of as a difficult struggle. We must climb a very erect ladder; we must crush our hearts under foot; we must become long-faced and solemn. But there is a viewpoint that cheers us. We can *play* ourselves into Heaven; we can make the climb up the ladder, we can make even the trampling on our boisterous affections, *play*.

St. Augustine shows us how we can make work play. Among his pithy, epigrammatic sayings that search the heart of life, is this: "*The toys of men are called business.*" If that is true, and if what the Apostleship of Prayer means, is also true, then we can play ourselves into Heaven. First, then, we know that the Apostleship of Prayer means a union of members combined to pray daily for the intention of Associates and especially in union with the Sacred Heart. The First Degree consists in saying the *Morning Offering* that is, in offering to God, the thoughts, words, and actions of the day. We make the day and all we do a prayer and hence we are winning Heaven by praying.

Now the "toys of men are called business." This means nothing more than that men play when they work, gaining from work all the profit and

delight and benefit that the child gains from play. Therefore, if a man offers all his work in the *Morning Offering*, he is playing himself into Heaven. He has already offered his thoughts and words and play. The only thing left is work. But St. Augustine says that man's business is his toy, that is, his play, and so, by making the *Morning Offering* man really plays himself into Heaven. We have only to prove that man gains all the profit, delight, and interest from his work that the child does from his play, and that is not so tremendous a task.

The child with his steam engine and train of cars is nothing but a picture in miniature of the railroad official and his mighty monsters of steam. The boy who winds the spring on his toy monoplane and flips it into the air, watching its flight and studying the machine intently, is only a smaller shadow of the modern genius. Take the telescope and look through the small end. You will see the Wright Brothers or Curtiss. Turn the telescope around and you will see the boy with his toy. The plane means business to the Wrights or Curtiss; it is only a toy for the boy, but still the grown men know that it is their plaything, too, and the boy is ever wishing that he could put the machine to some practical use.

The same is true of the boy with his row of tin soldiers, his fleet of battleships, his steel bridge or blocks with which to build an architecturally perfect house. The girl with her dolls, her sewing, her tennis racquet, her jacks, and volley ball, is an illustration of the same thing, for the doll may some day become a real baby, the sewing a

necessity, and the health, skill and energy acquired by games, indispensable.

Interesting toys will develop into interesting work, and behind the toy is the man and the woman.

Furthermore, the first idea in business is not the attainment of money. Men may think it is, but analysis shows that man sticks to his business because he is interested in it, just as the boy sticks to his steam engine or aeroplane, not because he makes money, but because he is keenly enjoying them. He is interested, absorbed, and this is the true reason why a man's business may justly be called his toy, his plaything. Surely, it is not something with which he plays, but in which he is interested, and there is no chance of deception in calling a man's business his plaything, if you take the view that *because* the business *interests* him, even as the toy *interests* the child, therefore, the business is the man's toy.

Direct this interest to God in the *Morning Offering* and you will see at once that the man is playing himself into Heaven.

Again, the child benefits by playing and so does the man. The benefit does not come so much from the mere running of the toy engine. There is more than that for the child. He is developing his imagination and intellect while playing and thus forming himself for the future. When the boy starts the engine, ringing the bell, whistling, choo-choo-ing, he sees the Broad Street Station or the Grand Central. He is reproducing what he observed and is simply putting into concrete form the pictures on his brain. This is splendid,

for it is mind activity, and all children's play gains its interest for them not so much because of what they play with, but because of the imaginative element underlying their play.

You cannot help but be benefited by your work, too. The underlying element is not imagination, but the earnest truth that Heaven is your goal, that your work is not lasting until it wins interest for you in Heaven. Is not this a benefit that you can obtain by offering your work to God every morning?

Every boy rejoices in contest just as every man, no matter what his business or position, faces contest, opposition, fight. These elements produce character, and mental development. The boy's steam engine is forever running races with some other boy's. His aeroplane may be the only one whirling above the dining-room table, but in his mind's eye there is another plane challenging his all the time. This belongs to Jimmie, next door, and there is an interminable contest and a continual defeat—for Jimmie. This element in play helps to make the boy heroic, since he faces difficulty, delights in contest, and is most chivalrous to his fallen rival.

The same is true of the man engaged in business. The contest is unending. He, indeed, does not have to imagine rivals. He would prefer that they were products of his brain, but he must come face to face with realities only too evident, and yet the benefit for him is the same as for the boy. His character is developed. His manhood is matured by facing and overcoming the problems. So then the interest in the work itself, the gain in delight, in character development and in material

prosperity, bind man to his work, call it a toy, if you will.

This is something worth while offering to the Sacred Heart each day, for this means struggle, this is the struggle of your day. Offer it with the rest and the world becomes nothing more than a Noah's Ark of delightful toys, wherewith we win Heaven.

Reflect on this truth, that when a man retires from his business, he begins to fail in health. Is it not often true that old age begins to lean heavily on a man's shoulders only when he leaves his manhood toys of work behind him? Life without work is for the grown man what life without toys is for the boy. We live for accomplishment not only for this life but for Heaven, and when we fail to accomplish; when we resign, or retire, we cease to interest ourselves and the rest of the world. But it is more serious than that. What is the great reason for modern social evils if not the fact that men and women have too much leisure? You know that the child without his toys will surely get into mischief, and the man and woman without work will get into the courts and the noisome newspapers.

You can never play yourself into Heaven if you resign or retire from the *Morning Offering*. No matter what the delight or the profit or the character development gained in your work, you must offer it all to God if you will gain Heaven through play. Offer everything to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and even as the boy grows out of his toys, so will you grow out of the business-toys into the maturity of God's sonship, since when you worked you did it for Him, and now there is

naught to do but rejoice in the Heaven your work has won.

Thus the toys of the boy help train him for manhood, and the toys of the man, his work, develop him into a child of God, if it is all offered to Him.

God be with you in your little home-worlds, and may He send you the blessing which the old Patriarch gave his son: "God give' thee the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth," that is, the grace of material prosperity and the grace of God.¹

¹*Gen.* xxvii, 28.

THE END.

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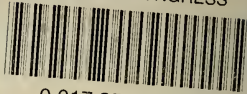
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